

ACME

January No. 25

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M A G A Z I N E O F
HORROR

THE BIZARRE, THE FRIGHTENING, THE GRUESOME



THE
COLOSSUS
OF
YLOURGNE

by CLARK ASHTON
SMITH



WHEN DEAD
GODS WAKE

by VICTOR
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The Bizarro and The Unusual

Volume 5

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Robert A. W. Lowndes, Editor

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The Editor's Page

September 1, 1930 fell on a Wednesday; that was the day the new issue of *WONDER STORIES* was due to go on sale, but there was always the hope that I might see it a day or two before, so I started to haunt the local newsstands Monday. Being entirely innocent of distribution, I didn't know that since all the stands carried the magazine, they'd all get the new issue at the same time. I don't recall now whether I had to wait until Wednesday, but I'll never forget the gasp of sheer delight that filled me when I saw the magnificently lurid cover that graced the new issue. The cover was by Frank R. Paul; the story illustrated was *Marooned in Andromeda*, by an author whose name I had never seen before: Clark Ashton Smith. Later that month, the new (and, alas, final) issue of *AMAZING DETECTIVE TALES* carried another Smith story: *Murder in the Fourth Dimension*.

But it was not until the following June, when *WONDERSTORIES* presented *The City of Singing Flame* (title changed to *The City of the Singing Flame* when Arkham House reran it, along with the sequel in the first CAS collection, *Out of Space and Time*; 1942), with another wonderful cover by Paul, that those of us who knew not *WEIRD TALES* began to get the full flavor of this author. It was later that year (1931), when I picked up the October issue of *WT* and found stories both by Smith and Edmond Hamil-

ton listed on the contents page, that I first purchased the magazine.

It is more difficult for me to write about Smith than about Dr. Keller and H.P. Lovecraft, because I never felt any personal involvement with him, despite the fact that his stories seemed wonderful to me. Most of us, back in the 30's, were constantly being put on the defensive in relation to reading science fiction and weird fiction at all; and when a favorite author was attacked violently, our hackles rose. I'd read my first Keller story in 1928, and remembered it vividly when I saw his name on the cover of *SCIENCE WONDER STORIES* in 1929. When I finally managed to get a subscription to SWS, starting with the January 1930 issue, *The Reader Speaks* department was running a controversy over Keller, in relation to *The Human Termites*. It wasn't merely that some readers didn't care for the story; they detested it, they thought Keller's writings totally worthless, they proclaimed that anyone who found such trash good was obviously an imbecile—his brain no doubt rotted away from reading science fiction in the first place. And the vituperation that greeted the appearance of *At The Mountains of Madness*, when it appeared in *ASTOUNDING STORIES* in 1936, involved my emotions with H.P. Lovecraft as a person. (With both authors, such vitriol came from a minority of published letters—but, as I said, most of us readers felt very defensive in those days.) But I did not see much dislike of Smith put in such a way as, it seemed, to be a personal attack on me for liking him. That's the only explanation I

can think of for my relative lack of feeling for him, as compared to Keller and Lovecraft; I still think many of the stories themselves are entirely delightful.

The Colossus of Ylourgne is among the group of stories CAS wrote about medieval Averroigne, the others being *The Maker of Gargoyles*, *The Holiness of Azederac*, *The Beast of Averroigne*, *The Mandrakes*, *The Disinterment of Venus*, *The Satyr*, *The End of the Story*, *A Rendezvous in Averroigne*, *Mother of Toads*, and *The Enchantress of Sylaire*. All except *The Satyr* originally appeared in *WEIRD TALES*, and the group was published there between 1930 and 1941. Two of the stories were voted by the readers as best in the issue: *The End of the Story* and *The Colossus of Ylourgne*.

(It's often been noted that Editor Farnsworth Wright never selected a Lovecraft story for cover illustration; not only that, no Lovecraft story was ever selected for feature pre-viewing on the "Coming Next Month" page; they were simply announced with the other stories below the feature. Smith received two covers from Wright, and six featurings on the preview page — *Colossus* is one of the six. After Wright was put out of the editorship, the "Coming Next Month" page was dropped; Smith did, however, receive one more cover illustration, but his appearances in the McIlraith WT were very few.)

During the period (which, for me, is the golden period of WT, the years of Farnsworth Wright — although the McIlraith era, as a whole, gave us more fine stories than the editor is usually credited for), Clark Ashton

(Turn to page 127)

Who Was The Strange And Sinister Dr. Lessman?

"Living corpses! Men and women filched from the grave, festering in their moldering cerements, talking, laughing, dancing, breathing, holding hellish jubilee! All this have I seen — and more. Yet who will believe me — I who am an inmate of the House of the Living Dead? Even as I pen this screed I look down and see the rotting cloth dropping from my mildewed framework with every move and feel the maggots bore their tortuous way through my decaying carcass. Ugh! Even I, living dead man that I am, inured to the horror of it all, shudder as I write.

"I am helpless. Would that I had the power to free myself from the foul grasp of Lessman, the master of us all! Across the room, lies the body of Carter Cope. Soon . . . I will return to occupy it . . ."

You Won't Want To Miss

THE HOUSE OF THE LIVING DEAD

by Harold Ward

Complete in the Fall Issue of
STARTLING MYSTERY
STORIES
see page 125

There Shall Be No Darkness

by James Blish

JAMES BLISH has very rarely deviated from science fiction in his imaginative stories, and to the best of my knowledge, where he has essayed into fantasy, it has been science directed fantasy—with the exception of *Black Easter*, or *Faust Aleph-Null*. The present story is not an exception: the werewolf we meet here is no supernatural manifestation but a plausibly explained creature; neither the science fiction nor the horror element is slighted, so that we feel that this story was rightly published in *THRILLING WONDER STORIES* and it has equal validity here.

Blish was seen in the letter department of *ASTOUNDING STORIES* in 1932, and tried his hand at fan magazine publishing later in the 30s. His first published story was in the initial issue of Frederik Pohl's *SUPER SCIENCE STORIES* in 1940, and his first science fiction novel, *Let The Finder Beware*, appeared in the December 1949 issue of *THRILLING WONDER STORIES*; expanded, it became his first hard-cover book, *Jack of Eagles*, soon to be re-issued in soft covers. His theological science fiction novel, *A Case of Conscience*, won a Hugo in 1959. But the book which gives him the most satisfaction, to date, is not science fiction and has never been published in this country. *Dr. Mirabilis*, a novel about Roger Bacon and the founding of the scientific method, was published by Faber & Faber in England, where it became both a critical and commercial success.

IT WAS ABOUT 10:00 P.M. when Paul Foote decided that there was a monster at Newcliffe's houseparty.

Foote was tight at the time—tighter than he liked to be ever. He sprawled in a too-easy chair in the front room on the end of his spine, his arms resting on the high arms of the chair. A half-empty glass depended laxly from his right hand. A darker spot on one gray trouser-leg showed where some of the drink had gone. Through half-shut eyes he watched Jarmoskowski at the piano.

The pianist was playing, finally, the Scriabin sonata for which the rest of the gathering had been waiting but for Foote, who was a painter with a tin ear, it wasn't music at all. It was a cantrap, whose implications were secret and horrible.

The room was stuffy and was only half as large as it had been during the afternoon and Foote was afraid that he was the only living man in it except for Jan Jarmoskowski. The rest were wax figures, pretending to be humans in an aesthetic trance.

Of Jarmoskowski's vitality there could be no question. He was not handsome but there was in him a pure brute force that had its own beauty—that and the beauty of precision with which the force was controlled. When his big hairy hands came down it seemed that the piano should fall into flinders. But the impact of fingers on keys was calculated to the single dyne.

It was odd to see such delicacy behind such a face. Jarmoskowski's hair grew too low on his rounded head despite the fact that he had avoided carefully any suggestion of Musician's Haircut. His brows were straight, rectangular, so shaggy that they seemed to meet.

From where Foote sat he noticed for the first time the odd way the Pole's ears were placed—tilted forward as if in animal attention, so that the vestigial "point" really was in the uppermost position.

They were cocked directly toward the keyboard, reminding Foote irresistibly of the dog on the His Master's Voice trade-mark.

Where had he seen that head before? In Matthias Gruenwald, perhaps—in that panel on the Isenheim Altar that showed the Temptation of St. Anthony. Or was it one of the illustrations in the *Red Grimoire*, those odd old woodcuts that Chris Lundgren called "Rorschach tests of the mediaeval mind"?

Jarmoskowski finished the Scriabin, paused, touched his hands together reflectively, began a work of his own, the *Galliard Fantastique*.

The wax figures did not stir, but a soft eerie sigh of recognition came from their frozen lips.

There was another person in the room but Foote could not tell who it was. When he turned his unfocused eyes to count, his mind went back on him and he never managed to reach a total. But somehow there was the impression of another presence that had not been of the party before.

Jarmoskowski was not the presence. He had been there before. But he had something to do with it. There was an eighth presence now and it had something to do with Jarmoskowski.

What was it?

For it was there—there was no doubt about that. The energy which the rest of Foote's senses ordinarily would have consumed was flowing into his instincts now because his senses were numbed. Acutely, poignantly, his instincts told him of the Monster. It hovered around the piano, sat next to Jarmoskowski as he caressed the musical beast's teeth, blended with the long body and the serpentine fingers.

Foote had never had the horrors from drinking before and he knew he did not have them now. A part of his mind which was not drunk had recognized real horror somewhere in this room. And the whole of his mind, its skeptical barriers down, believed and trembled within itself.

The batlike circling of the frantic notes was stilled abruptly. Foote blinked, startled. "Already?" he said stupidly.

"Already?" Jarmoskowski echoed. "But that's a long piece, Paul. Your fascination speaks well for my writing."

His eyes flashed redly as he looked directly at the painter. Foote tried frantically to remember whether or not his eyes had been red during the afternoon. Or whether it was possible for any man's eyes to be as red at any time as this man's were now.

"The writing?" he said, condensing the far-flung diffusion of his brain. Newcliffe's highballs were damn strong. "Hardly the writing, Jan. Such fingers as those could put fascination into *Three Blind Mice*."

He laughed inside at the parade of emotions which marched across Jarmoskowski's face. Startlement at a compliment from Foote—for there had been an inexplicable antagonism between the two since the pianist had first arrived—then puzzled reflection—then finally veiled anger as the hidden slur bared its fangs in his mind. Nevertheless the man could laugh at it.

"They are long, aren't they?" he said to the rest of the group, unrolling them like the party noisemakers which turn from snail to snake when blown through. "But it's a mistake to suppose that they assist my playing, I assure you. Mostly they stumble over each other. Especially over this one."

He held up his hands for inspection. Suddenly Foote was trembling. On both hands, the index fingers and the middle fingers were exactly the same length.

"I suppose Lundgren would call me a mutation. It's a nuisance at the piano."

Doris Gilmore, once a student of Jarmoskowski in Prague, and still obviously, painfully, in love with him, shook coppery hair back from her shoulders and held up her own hands.

"My fingers are so stubby," she said ruefully. "Hardly pianist's hands at all."

"The hands of a master pianist," Jarmoskowski said. He smiled, scratching his palms abstractedly, and Foote found himself in a universe of brilliant perfectly-even teeth. No, not perfectly even. The polished rows were bounded almost mathematically by slightly longer cuspids. They reminded him of that idiotic Poe story—was it *Berenice*? Obviously Jarmoskowski would not die a natural death. He would be killed by a dentist for possession of those teeth.

"Three fourths of the greatest pianists I know have hands like truck drivers," Jarmoskowski was saying. "Surgeons too, as Lundgren will tell you. Long fingers tend to be clumsy."

"You seem to manage to make tremendous music, all the same," Newcliffe said, getting up.

"Thank you, Tom." Jarmoskowski seemed to take his host's rising as a signal that he was not going to be required to play any more. He lifted his feet from the pedals and swung them around to the end of the bench. Several of the others rose also. Foote struggled up to numb feet from the infernal depths of the armchair. He set his glass cautiously on the side-table and picked his way over to Christian Lundgren.

"I read your paper, the one you read to the Stockholm Congress," he said, controlling his tongue with difficulty. "Jarmoskowski's hands are—"

"Yes," the psychiatrist said, looking at Foote with sharp, troubled eyes. Suddenly Foote was aware of Lundgren's chain of thought. The gray, chubby little man was assessing his drunkenness, and wondering whether or not Foote would have forgotten the whole business in the morning.

Lundgren made a gesture of dismissal. "I saw them," he said, his tone flat. "A mutation probably, as he himself suggests. This is the twentieth century. I'm going to bed and forget it. Which you may take for advice as well as information."

He stalked out of the room, leaving Foote standing alone, wondering

whether to be reassured or more alarmed than before. Lundgren should know. Still, if Jarmoskowski was what he seemed—

The party appeared to be surviving quite nicely without Foote. Conversations were starting up about the big room. Jarmoskowski and Doris shared the piano bench and were talking in low tones, punctuated now and then by brilliant arpeggios as the Pole showed her easier ways of handling the work she had played before dinner.

James and Bennington, the American critic, were dissecting James' most recent novel for a fascinated Newcliffe. Blandly innocent Caroline Newcliffe was talking to the air about nothing at all. Nobody missed Lundgren and it seemed unlikely that Foote would be missed.

He walked with wobbly nonchalance into the dining room, where the butler was still clearing the table.

"Scuse me," he said. "Little experiment. Return in the morning." He snatched a knife from the table, looked for the door which led from the dining room into the foyer, propelled himself through it. The hallway was dim but intelligible.

As he closed the door to his room he paused for a moment to listen to Jarmoskowski's technical exhibition on the keys. It might be that at midnight Jarmoskowski would give another sort of exhibition. If he did Foote would be glad to have the knife. He shrugged uneasily, closed the door all the way and walked over to his bedroom window.

At 11:30, Jarmoskowski stood alone on the terrace of Newcliffe's country house. Although there was no wind the night was frozen with a piercing cold—but he did not seem to notice it. He stood motionless, like a black statue, with only the long streamers of his breathing, like twin jets of steam from the nostrils of a dragon, to show that he was alive.

Through the haze of lace that curtained Foote's window Jarmoskowski was an heroic pillar of black stone—but a pillar above a fumarole.

The front of the house was entirely dark and the moonlight gleamed dully on the snow. In the dim light the heavy tower which was the central structure was like some ancient donjon-keep. Thin slits of embrasures watched the landscape with a dark vacuity and each of the crowning merlons wore a helmet of snow.

The house huddled against the malice of the white night. A sense of age invested it. The curtains smelt of dust and antiquity. It seemed impossible that anyone but Foote and Jarmoskowski could be alive in it. After a long moment Foote moved the curtain very slightly and drew it back.

His face was drenched in moonlight and he drew back into the dark again, leaving the curtains parted.

If Jarmoskowski saw the furtive motion he gave no sign. He remained engrossed in the acerb beauty of the night. Almost the whole of Newcliffe's estate was visible from where he stood. Even the black border of the forest, beyond the golf course to the right, could be seen through the dry frigid air. A few isolated trees stood nearer the house, casting grotesque shadows on the snow, shadows that flowed and changed shape with infinite slowness as the moon moved.

Jarmoskowski sighed and scratched his left palm. His lips moved soundlessly.

A wandering cloud floated idly toward the moon, its shadow preceding it, gliding in a rush of darkness toward the house. The gentle ripples of the snowbanks contorted in the vast umbra, assumed demon shapes, twisted bodies half-rising from the earth, sinking back, rising again, whirling closer. A damp frigid wind rose briefly, whipping crystalline showers of snow from the terrace flagstones.

The wind died as the shadow engulfed the house. For a long instant the darkness and silence persisted. Then, from somewhere among the stables behind the house, a dog raised his voice in a faint sustained throbbing howl. Others joined him.

Jarmoskowski's teeth gleamed dimly in the occluded moonlight. He stood a moment longer—then his head turned with startling quickness and his eyes flashed a feral scarlet at the dark window where Foote hovered. Foote released the curtains hastily. Even through them he could see the pianist's grim phosphorescent smile. Jarmoskowski went back into the house.

There was a single small light burning in the corridor. Jarmoskowski's room was at the end of the hall next to Foote's. As he walked reflectively toward it the door of the room across from Foote's swung open and Doris Gilmore came out, clad in a houseboat, a towel over her arm and a toothbrush in her hand.

"Oh!" she said. Jarmoskowski turned toward her. Foote slipped behind his back and into Jarmoskowski's room. He did not propose to have Doris a witness to the thing he expected from Jarmoskowski.

In a quieter voice Doris said, "Oh, it's you, Jan. You startled me."

"So I see," Jarmoskowski's voice said. Foote canted one eye around the edge of the door. "It appears that we are the night-owls of the party."

"The rest are tight. Especially that horrible painter. I've been reading

the magazines Tom left by my bed and I finally decided to go to sleep too. What have you been doing?"

"Oh, I was just out on the terrace, getting a breath of air. I like the winter night—it bites."

"The dogs are restless, too," she said. "Did you hear them?"

"Yes," Jarmoskowski said and smiled. "Why does a full moon make a dog feel so sorry for himself?"

"Maybe there's a banshee about."

"I doubt it," Jarmoskowski said. "This house isn't old enough to have any family psychopomps. As far as I know none of Tom's or Caroline's relatives have had the privilege of dying in it."

"You talk as if you almost believed it." There was a shiver in her voice. She wrapped the houseboat more tightly about her slim waist.

"I come from a country where belief in such things is common. In Poland most of the skeptics are imported."

"I wish you'd pretend to be an exception," she said. "You give me the creeps."

He nodded seriously. They looked at each other. Then he stepped forward and took her hands in his.

Foote felt a belated flicker of embarrassment. If he were wrong he'd speedily find himself in a position for which no apology would be possible.

The girl was looking up at Jarmoskowski, smiling uncertainly. "Jan," she said.

"No," Jarmoskowski said. "Wait. It has been a long time since Prague."

"I see," she said. She tried to release her hands.

Jarmoskowski said sharply, "You don't see. I was eighteen then. You were—what was it?—eleven, I think. In those days I was proud of your schoolgirl crush but of course infinitely too old for you: I am not so old any more and you are so lovely—no, no, hear me out, please! Doris, I love you now, as I can see you love me, but—"

In the brief pause Foote could hear the sharp indrawn breaths that Doris Gilmore was trying to control. He writhed with shame for himself. He had no business being—

"But we must wait, Doris—until I warn you of something neither of us could have dreamed in the old days."

"Warn me?"

"Yes," Jarmoskowski paused again. Then he said, "You will find it

hard to believe. But if you do we may yet be happy. Doris, I cannot be a skeptic. I am — "

He stopped. He had looked down abstractedly at her hands as if searching for precisely the right words. Then, slowly, he turned her hands over until they rested palms up upon his. An expression of inexpressible shock crossed his face and Foote saw his grip tighten spasmodically.

In that silent moment, Foote knew that he had been right about Jarmoskowski and despite his pleasure he was frightened.

For an instant Jarmoskowski shut his eyes. The muscles along his jaw stood out with the violence with which he was clenching his teeth. Then, deliberately, he folded Doris' hands together and his curious fingers made a fist about them. When his eyes opened again they were red as flame in the weak light.

Doris jerked her hands free and crossed them over her breasts. "Jan — what is it? What's the matter?"

His face, that should have been flying into flinders under the force of the thing behind it, came under control muscle by muscle.

"Nothing," he said. "There's really no point in what I was going to say. Nice to have seen you again, Doris. Goodnight."

He brushed past her, walked the rest of the way down the corridor, wrenched back the doorknob of his own room. Foote barely managed to get out of his way.

Behind the house a dog howled and was silent again.

2

IN JARMOSKOWSKI'S ROOM THE MOONLIGHT played in through the open window upon a carefully turned-down bed and the cold air had penetrated every cranny. He shut the door and went directly across the room to the table beside his bed. As he crossed the path of silvery light his shadow was oddly foreshortened, so that it looked as if it were walking on all fours. There was a lamp on the side table and he reached for it.

Then he stopped dead still, his hand halfway to the switch. He seemed to be listening. Finally, he turned and looked back across the room, directly at the spot behind the door where Foote was standing.

It was the blackest spot of all, for it had its back to the moon. But Jarmoskowski said immediately, "Hello, Paul. Aren't you up rather late?"

Foote did not reply for a while. His senses were still a little alcohol-numbed and he was overwhelmed by the thing he knew to be. He stood

silently in the darkness, watching the Pole's barely-visible figure beside the fresh bed, and the sound of his own breathing was loud in his ears. The broad flat streamer of moonlight lay between them like a metallic river.

"I'm going to bed shortly," he said at last. His voice sounded flat and dead and faraway, as if belonging to someone else entirely. "I just came to issue a little warning."

"Well, well," said Jarmoskowski pleasantly. "Warnings seem to be all the vogue this evening. Do you customarily pay your social calls with a knife in your hand?"

"That's the warning, Jarmoskowski. The knife is a—*silver* knife."

"You must be drunker than ever," said the pianist. "Why don't you just go to bed? We can talk about it in the morning."

"Don't give me that," Foote snapped savagely. "You can't fool me. I know you for what you are."

"All right. I'll bite, as Bennington would say."

"Yes, you'd bite," Foote said and his voice shook a little despite himself. "Shall I give it a name, Jarmoskowski? In Poland they called you *Vrolok*, didn't they? And in France it was *loup-garou*. In the Carpathians it was *stregoica* or *strega* or *Vlkoslak*."

"Your command of languages is greater than your common sense. But you interest me strangely. Isn't it a little out of season for such things? The aconites do not bloom in the dead of winter. And perhaps the thing you call so many fluent names is also out of the season in nineteen sixty-two."

"The dogs hate you," Foote said softly. "That was a fine display Brucey put on when Tom brought him in from his run and he found you here. Walked sidewise through the room, growling, watching you with every step until Tom dragged him out. He's howling now. And that shock you got from the table silver at dinner—I heard your excuse about rubber-soled shoes."

"I looked under the table, if you recall, and your shoes turned out to be leather-soled. But was a pretty feeble excuse anyhow, for anybody knows that you can't get an electric shock from an ungrounded piece of tableware, no matter how long you've been scuffing rubber. It was the silver that hurt you the first time you touched it. Silver's deadly, isn't it?"

"And those fingers—the index fingers as long as the middle ones—you *were* clever about those. You were careful to call everybody's attention to them. It's supposed to be the obvious that everybody misses. But

Jarmoskowski, that 'Purloined Letter' gag has been worked too often in detective stories. It didn't fool Lundgren and it didn't fool me."

"Ah," Jarmoskowski said. "Quite a catalogue."

"There's more. How does it happen that your eyes were gray all afternoon and turned red as soon as the moon rose? And the palms of your hands—there was some hair growing there, but you shaved it off, didn't you, Jarmoskowski? I've been watching you scratch them. Everything about you, the way you look, the way you act—everything you say screams your nature in a dozen languages to anyone who knows the signs."

After a long silence Jarmoskowski said, "I see. You've been most attentive, Paul—I see you are what people call the suspicious drunk. But I appreciate your warning, Paul. Let us suppose that what you say of me is true. Have you thought that, knowing that you know, I would have no choice any more? That the first word you said to me about it all might brand *your* palm with the pentagram?"

Foote had not thought about it. He had spent too much time trying to convince himself that it was all a pipe dream. A shock of blinding terror convulsed him. The silver knife clattered to the floor. He snatched up his hands and stared frantically at them, straining his eyes through the blackness. The full horror implicit in Jarmoskowski's suggestion struck him all at once with paralyzing force.

From the other side of his moonlit room, Jarmoskowski's voice came mockingly. "So—you hadn't thought. *Better never* than late, Paul!"

The dim figure of Jarmoskowski began to writhe and ripple in the reflected moonlight. It foreshortened, twisting obscenely, sinking toward the floor, flesh and clothing alike *changing* into something not yet describable.

A cry ripped from Foote's throat and he willed his legs to move with frantic, nightmarish urgency. His clutching hand grasped the doorknob. Tearing his eyes from the hypnotic fascination of the thing that was going on across from him he leaped from his corner and out into the corridor.

A bare second after he had slammed the door, something struck it a frightful blow from the inside. The paneling split. He held it shut with all the strength in his body.

A dim white shape drifted down upon him through the dark corridor and a fresh spasm of fear sent rivers of sweat down on his back, his sides, into his eyes. But it was only the girl.

"Paul! What on earth! What's the *matter*!"

"Quick!" he choked out. "Get something silver—something heavy made out of silver—quick, *quick!*"

Despite her astonishment the frantic urgency in his voice was enough. She darted back into her room.

To Foote it seemed eternity before she returned—an eternity while he listened with abnormally sensitized ears for a sound inside the room. Once he thought he heard a low growl but he was not sure. The sealike hissing and sighing of his blood, rushing through the channels of the inner ear, seemed very loud to him. He couldn't imagine why it was not arousing the whole country-side. He clung to the doorknob and panted.

Then the girl was back, bearing a silver candlestick nearly three feet in length—a weapon that was almost too good, for this fright-weakened muscles had some difficulty in lifting it. He shifted his grip on the knob to his left hand, hefted the candlestick awkwardly.

"All right," he said, in what he hoped was a grim voice. "Now let him come."

"What in heaven's name is this all about?" Doris said. "You're waking everybody in the house with this racket. Look—even one of the dogs is in to see—"

"The dog!"

He swung around, releasing the doorknob. Not ten paces from them, an enormous coal-black animal, nearly five feet in length, grinned at them with polished fangs. As soon as it saw Foote move it snarled. Its eyes gleamed red in the single bulb.

It sprang.

Foote lifted the candlestick high and brought it down—but the animal was not there. Somehow the leap was never completed. There was a brief flash of movement at the open end of the corridor, then darkness and silence.

"He saw the candlestick," Foote panted. "Must have jumped out the window and come around through the front door. Saw the silver and beat it."

"Paul!" Doris cried. "What—how did you know that thing would jump? It was so big! Silver—"

He chuckled, surprising even himself. He had a mental picture of what the truth would sound like to Doris. "That," he said, "was a wolf and a whopping one. Even the usual kind of wolf isn't very friendly and—"

Footsteps sounded on the floor above and the voice of Newcliffe, grumbling loudly, came down the stairs. Newcliffe liked his evenings

noisy and his nights quiet. The whole house seemed to have heard the commotion, for in a moment a number of half-clad figures were elbowing out into the corridor, wanting to know what was up.

Abruptly the lights went on, revealing blinking faces and pajama-clad forms struggling into robes. Newcliffe came down the stairs. Caroline was with him, impeccable even in disarray, her face openly and honestly ignorant and unashamedly beautiful. She made an excellent foil for Tom. She was no lion-hunter but she loved parties. Evidently she was pleased that the party was starting again.

"What's all this?" Newcliffe demanded in a gravelly voice. "Foote, are you the center of this whirlpool? Why all the noise?"

"Werewolf," said Foote, suddenly very conscious of how meaningless the world would be here. "We've got a werewolf here. And somebody's marked out for him."

How else could you put it? Let it stand.

There was a chorus of "What's" as the group jostled about him. "Eh? What was that? . . . Werewolf, I thought he said . . . What's this all about? . . . Somebody's been a wolf . . . Is that new? What an uproar!"

"Paul," Lundgren's voice cut through. "Details, please."

"Jarmoskowski's a werewolf," Foote said grimly, making his tone as emotionless and factual as he could. "I suspected it earlier tonight and went into his room and accused him of it. He changed shape, right on the spot while I was watching."

The sweat started out afresh at the recollection of that horrible, half-seen mutation. "He came around into the hall and went for us and I scared him off with a silver candlestick for a club." He realized suddenly that he still held the candlestick, brandished it as proof. "Doris saw the wolf—she'll vouch for that."

"I saw a big doglike thing, all right," Doris admitted. "And it did jump at us. It was black and huge teeth. But—Paul, was that supposed to be Jan? Why, that's ridiculous!"

"It certainly is," Newcliffe said feelingly. "Getting us all up for a practical joke. Probably one of the dogs is loose."

"Do you have any coal-black dogs five feet long?" Foote demanded desperately. "And where's Jarmoskowski now. Why isn't he here? Answer me that!"

Bennington gave a skeptical grunt from the background and opened Jarmoskowski's door. The party tried to jam itself into the room. Foote forced his way through the jam.

"See? He isn't here, either. And the bed's not been slept in. Doris, you saw him go in there. Did you see him come out?"

The girl looked startled. "No, but I was in my room —"

"All right. Here. Look at this." Foote led the way over to the window and pointed. "See? The prints on the snow?"

One by one the others leaned out. There was no arguing it. A set of animal prints, like large dogtracks, led away from a spot just beneath Jarmoskowski's window — a spot where the disturbed snow indicated the landing of some heavy body.

"Follow them around," Foote said. "They lead around to the front door, and in."

"Have you traced them?" James asked.

"I don't have to. I saw the thing, James."

"Maybe he must went for a walk," Caroline suggested.

"Barefoot?" There are his shoes."

Bennington vaulted over the windowsill with an agility astonishing for so round a man and plowed away with slippered feet along the line of tracks. A little while later he entered the room behind their backs.

"Paul's right," he said, above the hub-bub of excited conversation. "The tracks go around to the front door, then come out again and go away around the side of the house toward the golf course." He rolled up his wet pajama-cuffs awkwardly.

"This is crazy," Newcliffe declared angrily. "This is the twentieth century. We're like a lot of little children, panicked by darkness. There's no such thing as a werewolf!"

"I wouldn't place any wagers on that," James said. "Millions of people have thought so for hundreds of years. That's a lot of people."

Newcliffe turned sharply to Lundgren. "Chris, I can depend upon you at least to have your wits about you."

The psychiatrist smiled wanly. "You didn't read my Stockholm paper, did you, Tom? I mean my paper on mental diseases. Most of it dealt with lycanthropy — werewolfism."

"You mean — you believe this idiot story?"

"I spotted Jarmoskowski early in the evening," Lundgren said. "He must have shaved the hair on his palms but he has all the other signs — eyes bloodshot with moonrise, first and second fingers of equal length, pointed ears, domed prefrontal bones, elongated upper cuspids or fangs — in short, the typical hyperpineal type — a lycanthrope."

"Why didn't you say something?"

"I have a natural horror of being laughed at," Lundgren said drily.

"And *I didn't want to draw Jarmoskowski's attention to me.* These endocrine-imbalance cases have a way of making enemies very easily."

Foote grinned ruefully. If he had thought of that part of it before accusing Jarmoskowski he would have kept his big mouth shut.

"Lycanthropy is quite common," Lundgren droned, "but seldom mentioned. It is the little-known aberration of a little-known ductless gland. It appears to enable the victim to control his body."

"I'm still leery of this whole business," Bennington growled, from somewhere deep in his pigeon's chest. "I've known Jan for years. Nice fella—did a lot for me once. And I think there's enough discord in this house so that I won't add to it much if I say I wouldn't trust Paul Foote as far as I could throw him. By heaven, Paul, if this does turn out to be some practical joke of yours—"

"Ask Lundgren," Foote said.

There was dead silence, broken only by heavy breathing. Lundgren was known to every one of them as the world's ultimate authority on hormone-created insanity. Nobody seemed to want to ask him.

"Paul's right," Lundgren said at last. "Take it or leave it. Jarmoskowski is a lycanthrope. A hyper-pineal. No other gland could affect the blood-vessels of the eyes like that or make such a reorganization of the cells possible. Jarmoskowski is inarguably a werewolf."

Bennington sagged, the light of righteous incredulity dying from his eyes. "I'll be damned!" he muttered.

"We've got to get him tonight," Foote said. "He's seen the pentagram on somebody's palm—somebody in the party."

"What's that?" asked James.

"Common illusion of lycanthropic seizures," Lundgren said. "Hallucination, I should say. A five-pointed star inscribed in a circle—you find it in all the old mystical books, right back to the so-called fourth and fifth Books of Moses. The werewolf sees it on the palm of his next victim."

There was a gasping little scream from Doris. "So that's it!" she cried. "Dear God, I'm the one! He saw something on my hand tonight while we were talking in the hall. He was awfully startled and went away without another word. He said he was going to warn me about something and then he—"

"Steady," Bennington said in a soft voice that had all the penetrating power of a thunderclap. "There's safety in numbers. We're all here." Nevertheless, he could not keep himself from glancing surreptitiously over his shoulder.

"Well, that settles it," James said in earnest squeaky tones. "We've got to trail the—the beast and kill him. It should be easy to follow his trail in the snow. We must kill him before he kills Doris or somebody else. Even if he misses us it would be just as bad to have him roaming the countryside."

"What are you going to kill him with?" asked Lundgren matter-of-factly.

"Eh?"

"I said, what are you going to kill him with? With that pineal hormone in his blood he can laugh at any ordinary bullet. And since there are no chapels dedicated to St. Hubert around here you can't scare him to death with a church-blessed bullet."

"Silver will do," Foote said.

"Yes, silver will do. It poisons the pinearin-catalysis. But are you going out to hunt a full-grown wolf, a giant wolf, armed with table silver and candlesticks? Or is somebody here metallurgist enough to cast a decent silver bullet?"

Foote sighed. With the burden of proof lifted from him, completely sobered up by shock, he felt a little more like his old self, despite the pall of horror which hung over them.

"Like I always tell my friends," he said, "there's never a dull moment at a Newcliffe houseparty."

3

THE CLOCK STRUCK ONE-THIRTY. Foote picked up one of Newcliffe's rifles and hefted it. It felt—useless. He said, "How are you coming?"

The group by the kitchen stove shook their heads in comical unison. One of the gas burners had been jury-rigged as a giant Bunsen burner and they were trying to melt down some soft unalloyed silver articles, mostly of Mexican manufacture.

They were using a small earthenware bowl, also Mexican, for a crucible. It was lidded with the bottom of a flower pot, the hole in which had been plugged with a mixture of garden clay and rock wool yanked forcibly out of the insulation in the attic. The awkward flame leapt uncertainly and sent fantastic shadows flickering over their intent faces.

"We've got it melted, all right," Bennington said, lifting the lid cautiously with a pair of kitchen tongs and peering in. "But what do we do now? Drop it from the top of the tower?"

"You can't kill a wolf with buckshot," Newcliffe pointed out. Now that the problem had been reduced temporarily from a hypernatural one to ordinary hunting he was in his element. "And I haven't got a decent shotgun here anyhow. But we ought to be able to whack together a mold. The bullet should be soft enough so that it won't ruin the rifling of my guns."

He opened the door to the cellar stairs and disappeared, carrying several ordinary cartridges in one hand. Faintly the dogs renewed their howling and Doris began to tremble. Foote put his arm around her.

"It's all right," he said. "We'll get him. You're safe enough."

She swallowed. "I know," she agreed in a small voice. "But every time I think of the way he looked at my hands and how red his eyes were—You don't suppose he's prowling around the house? That that's what the dogs are howling about?"

"I don't know," Foote said carefully. "But dogs are funny that way. They can sense things at great distances. I suppose a man with pinear in his blood would have a strong odor to them. But he probably knows that we're after his scalp, so he won't be hanging around if he's smart."

She managed a tremulous smile. "All right," she said. "I'll try not to be frightened." He gave her an awkward reassuring pat, feeling a little absurd.

"Do you suppose we can use the dogs?" James wanted to know.

"Certainly," said Lundgren. "Dogs have always been our greatest allies against the abnormal. You saw what a rage Jarmoskowski's very presence put Brucey in this afternoon. He must have smelled the incipient seizure. Ah, Tom—what did you manage?"

Newcliffe set a wooden box on the table. "I pried the slug out of one shell for each gun," he said, "and made impressions in clay. The cold has made the stuff pretty hard, so it's a passable mold. Bring the silver over here."

Bennington lifted his improvised crucible from the burner, which immediately shot up a tall blue flame. James carefully turned it off.

"All right, pour," Newcliffe said. "Lundgren, you don't suppose it might help to chant a blessing or something?"

"Not unless Jarmoskowski overheard it—probably not even then since we haven't a priest among us."

"Okay. Pour, Bennington, before the goo hardens."

Bennington decanted sluggishly molten silver into each depression in the clay and Newcliffe cleaned away the oozy residue from the casts before it had time to thicken. At any other time the whole scene would have

been funny—now it was grimly grotesque. Newcliffe picked up the box and carried it back down to the cellar, where the emasculated cartridges awaited their new slugs.

"Who's going to carry these things, now?" Foote asked. "There are five rifles. James, how about you?"

"I couldn't hit an elephant's rump at three paces. Tom's an expert shot. So is Bennington here, with a shotgun anyhow."

"I can use a rifle," Bennington said diffidently.

"I've done some shooting," Foote said. "During the Battle of the Bulge I even hit something."

"I," Lundgren said, "am an honorary member of the Swiss Militia."

Nobody laughed. Most of them were aware that Lundgren in his own obscure way was bragging, that he had something to brag about. Newcliffe appeared abruptly from the cellar.

"I pried 'em loose, cooled 'em with snow and rolled 'em out with a file. They're probably badly crystallized but we needn't let that worry us."

He put one cartridge in the chamber of each rifle and shot the bolts home. "There's no sense in loading these any more thoroughly—ordinary bullets are no good anyhow, Chris says. Just make your first shots count. Who's elected?"

Foote, Lundgren and Bennington each took a rifle. Newcliffe took the fourth and handed the last one to his wife.

"I say, wait a minute," James objected. "Do you think that's wise, Tom? I mean, taking Caroline along?"

"Why certainly," Newcliffe said, looking surprised. "She shoots like a fiend—she's snatched prizes away from me a couple of times. I thought *everybody* was going along."

"That isn't right," Foote said. "Especially not Doris, since the wolf—that is, I don't think she ought to go."

"Are you going to leave her here by herself?"

"Oh no!" Doris cried. "Not here! I've got to go! I don't want to wait all alone in this house. He might come back, and there'd nobody here. I couldn't stand it!"

"We're *all* going," Newcliffe concluded. "We can't leave Doris here unprotected and we need Caroline's marksmanship. Let's get going. It's two now."

He put on his heavy coat and with the heavy eyed butler, went out to get the dogs. The rest of the company got out their own heavy clothes. Doris and Caroline climbed into ski-suits. They assembled one by one in the living room. Lundgren's eyes swung on a vase of iris-like flowers.

"Hello, what's this?" he said.

"Monkshood," Caroline informed him. "We grow it in the greenhouse. It's pretty, isn't it? Though the gardener says it's poisonous."

"Chris," Foote said. "That isn't wolfbane, is it?"

The psychiatrist shook his head. "I'm no botanist. I can't tell one aconite from the other. But it hardly matters. Hyperpineals are allergic to the whole group. The pollen, you see. As in hay fever your hyper-pineal breathes the pollen, anaphylaxis sets in and—"

"The last twist of the knife," James murmured.

A clamoring of dogs outside announced that Newcliffe was ready. With somber faces the party filed out through the front door. For some reason all of them avoided stepping on the wolf's prints in the snow. Their mien was that of condemned prisoners on the way to the tumbrils. Lundgren took one of the sprigs of flowers from the vase.

The moon had passed its zenith and was almost halfway down the sky, projecting the Bastille-like shadow of the house before it. But there was still plenty of light and the house itself was glowing from basement to tower room. Lundgren located Brucey in the milling yapping pack and abruptly thrust the sprig of flowers under his muzzle. The animal sniffed once, then crouched back and snarled softly.

"Wolfbane," Lundgren said. "Dogs don't react to the other aconites—basis of the legend, no doubt. Better fire your gardener, Caroline. In the end he's to blame for all this in the dead of winter. Lycanthropy normally is an autumn affliction."

James said,

"Even a man who says his prayers
Before he sleeps each night
May turn to a wolf when the wolfbane blooms
And the moon is high and bright."

"Stop it, you give me the horrors," Foote snapped angrily.

"Well, the dog knows now," said Newcliffe. "Good. It would have been hard for them to pick up the spoor from cold snow but Brucey can lead them. Let's go."

The tracks of the wolf were clear and sharp in the snow. It had formed a hard crust from which fine, powdery showers of tiny ice-crystals were whipped by a fitful wind. The tracks led around the side of the house and out across the golf course. The little group plodded grimly along beside them. The spoor was cold for the dogs but every so often they

would pick up a faint trace and go bounding ahead, yanking their master after them. For the most part however the party had to depend upon its eyes.

A heavy mass of clouds had gathered in the west. The moon dipped lower. Foote's shadow, grotesquely lengthened, marched on before him and the crusted snow crunched and crackled beneath his feet. There was a watchful unnaturally-still atmosphere to the night and they all moved in tense silence except for a few subdued growls and barks from the dogs.

Once the marks of the werewolf doubled back a short distance, then doubled again as if the monster had turned for a moment to look back at the house before continuing his prowling. For the most part however the trail led directly toward the dark boundary of the woods.

As the brush began to rise about them they stopped by mutual consent and peered warily ahead, rifles held ready for instant action. Far out across the countryside behind them, the great cloud-shadow once more began its sailing. The brilliantly-lit house stood out fantastically in the gloom.

"Should have turned those out," Newcliffe muttered, looking back. "Outlines us."

The dogs strained at their leashes. In the black west was an inaudible muttering as of winter thunder. Brucey pointed a quivering nose at the woods and growled.

"He's in there, all right."

"We'd better step on it," Bennington said, whispering. "Going to be plenty dark in about five minutes. Storm."

Still they hesitated, regarding the menacing darkness of the forest. Then Newcliffe waved his gun hand in the conventional deploy-as-skirmishers signal and plowed forward. The rest spread out in a loosely-spaced line and followed and Foote's finger trembled over his trigger.

The forest in the shrouded darkness was a place of clutching brittle claws, contorted bodies, and the briefly-glimpsed demon-faces of ambushed horrors. It was Dante's jungle, the woods of Purgatory, where each tree was a body frozen in agony and branches were gnarled arms and fingers which groaned in the wind or gave sharp tiny tinkling screams as they were broken off.

The underbrush grasped at Foote's legs. His feet broke jarringly through the crust of snow or were supported by it when he least expected support. His shoulders struck unseen tree-trunks. Imagined things sniffed frightfully at his heels or slunk about him just beyond his range of

vision. The touch of a hand was enough to make him jump and smother an involuntary outcry. The dogs strained and panted, weaving, no longer snarling, silent with a vicious intentness.

"They've picked up something, all right," Bennington whispered. "Turn 'em loose, Tom?"

Newcliffe bent and snapped the leashes free. Without a sound the animals shot ahead and disappeared.

Over the forest the oncoming storm-clouds crawled across the moon. Total blackness engulfed them. The beam of a powerful flashlight lanced from Newcliffe's free hand, picking out a path of tracks on the brush-littered snow. The rest of the night drew in closer about the blue-white ray.

"Hate to do this," Newcliffe said. "It gives us away. But he knows we're—Hello, it's snowing."

"Let's go then," Foote said. "The tracks will be blotted out shortly."

A terrible clamorous baying rolled suddenly through the woods. "That's it!" Newcliffe shouted. "Listen to them! Go get him, Brucey!"

They crashed ahead. Foote's heart was beating wildly, his nerves at an impossible pitch. The belling cry of the dogs echoed all around him, filling the universe with noise.

"They must have sighted him," he panted. "What a racket! They'll raise the whole countryside."

They plowed blindly through the snow-filled woods. Then, without any interval, they stumbled into a small clearing. Snowflakes flocculated the air. Something dashed between Foote's legs, snapping savagely, and he tripped and fell into a drift.

A voice shouted something indistinguishable. Foote's mouth was full of snow. He jerked his head up—and looked straight into the red rage-glowing eyes of the wolf.

It was standing on the other side of the clearing, facing him, the dogs leaping about it, snapping furiously at its legs. It made no sound at all but crouched tiger-fashion, its lips drawn back in a grinning travesty of Jarmoskowski's smile. It lashed at the dogs as they came closer. One of the dogs already lay writhing on the ground, a dark pool spreading from it, staining the snow.

"Shoot, for heaven's sake!" somebody screamed.

Newcliffe clapped his rifle to his shoulder, then lowered it indecisively. "I can't," he said. "The dogs are in the way."

"The heck with the dogs!" James shouted. "This is no fox-hunt! Shoot, Tom, you're the only one of us that's dear."

It was Foote who fired first. The rifle's flat crack echoed through the woods and snow puffed up in a little explosion by the wolf's left hind pad. A concerted groan arose from the party and Newcliffe's voice thundered above it, ordering his dogs back. Bennington aimed with inexorable care.

The werewolf did not wait. With a screaming snarl he burst through the ring of dogs and charged.

Foote jumped in front of Doris, throwing one arm across his throat. The world dissolved into rolling, twisting pandemonium, filled with screaming and shouting and the frantic hatred of dogs. The snow flew thick. Newcliffe's flashlight rolled away and lay on the snow, regarding the tree-tops with an idiot stare.

Then there was the sound of a heavy body moving swiftly away. The shouting died gradually.

"Anybody hurt?" James' voice asked. There was a general chorus of no's. Newcliffe retrieved his flashlight and played it about but the snow-fall had reached blizzard proportions and the light showed nothing but shadows and cold confetti.

"He got away," Bennington said. "And the snow will cover his tracks. Better call your dogs back, Tom."

"They're back," Newcliffe said. "When I call them off they come off."

He bent over the body of the injured animal, which was still twitching feebly. "So—so," he said softly. "So—Brucey. Easy—easy. So, Brucey—so."

Still murmuring, he brought his rifle into position with one arm. The dog's tail beat feebly against the snow.

"So, Brucey."

The rifle crashed.

Newcliffe arose, and looked away. "It looks as if we lose round one," he said tonelessly.

4

IT SEEMED TO BECOME DAYLIGHT VERY QUICKLY. The butler went phlegmatically around the house, snapping off the lights. If he knew what was going on he gave no sign of it.

"Cappy?" Newcliffe said into the phone. "Listen and get this straight—it's important. Send a cable to Consolidated Warfare Service—no, no, not the Zurich office, they've offices in London—and place an order for a case of .44 calibre rifle cartridges.

"Listen to me, dammit, I'm not through yet—with *silver slugs*. Yes, that's right—silver—and it had better be the pure stuff, too. No, not sterling, that's too hard. Tell them I want them flown over, and that they've got to arrive here tomorrow. Yes, I know it's impossible but if you offer them enough—yes, of course I'll cover it. Got that?"

"Garlic," Lundgren said to Caroline. She wrote it dutifully on her marketing list. "How many windows does this place have? All right, make it one dove for each and get half a dozen boxes of rosemary, too."

He turned to Foote. "We must cover every angle," he said somberly. "As soon as Tom gets off the phone I'll try to raise the local priest and get him out here with a truckload of silver crucifixes. Understand, Paul, there is a strong physiological basis behind all the mediaeval mumbo-jumbo.

"The herbs are anti-spasmodics—they act rather as ephedrine does in hay-fever to reduce the violence of the seizure. It's possible that Jan may not be able to maintain the wolf shape if he gets a good enough sniff. As for the religious trappings, that's all psychological.

"If Jan happens to be a skeptic in such matters they won't bother him but I suspect he's—" Lundgren's English abruptly gave out. The word he wanted obviously was not in his vocabulary. "*Aberglaeubig*," he said. "*Criandre*."

"Superstitious?" Foote suggested, smiling grimly.

"Yes. Yes, certainly. Who has better reason, may I ask?"

"But how does he maintain the wolf shape at all?"

"Oh, that's the easiest part. You know how water takes the shape of a vessel it sits in? Well, protoplasm is a liquid. This pineal hormone lowers the surface tension of the cells and at the same time short-circuits the sympathetic nervous system directly to the cerebral cortex.

"Result, a plastic, malleable body within limits. A wolf is easiest because the skeletons are similar—not much pinealin can do with bone, you see. An ape would be easier, but apes don't eat people."

"And vampires? Are they just advanced cases of the same thing?"

"Vampires," said Lundgren pontifically, "are people we put in padded cells. It's impossible to change the bony structure *that* much. They just think they're bats. But yes, it's advanced hyperpinealism. In the last stages it is quite something to see.

"The surface tension is lowered so much that the cells begin to boil away. Pretty soon there is just a mess. The process is arrested when the vascular system can no longer circulate the hormone but of course the victim is dead long before that."

"No cure?"

"None yet. Someday perhaps, but until then— We will be doing Jan a favor."

"Also," Newcliffe was saying, "drive over and pick me up six Browning automatic rifles. Never mind the bipods, just the rifles themselves. What? Well, you might call it a siege. All right, Cappy. No, I won't be in today. Pay everybody off and send them home until further notice."

"It's a good thing," Foote said, "that Newcliffe has money."

"It's a good thing," said Lundgren, "that he has me—and you. We'll see how twentieth century methods can cope with this Dark-Age disease."

Newcliffe hung up and Lundgren took possession of the phone. "As soon as my man gets back from the village I'm going to set out traps. He may be able to detect hidden metal. I've known dogs that could do it by smell in wet weather but it's worth a try."

"What's to prevent his just going away?" Doris asked. Somehow the shadows of exhaustion and fear around her eyes made her lovelier than ever.

"As I understand it he thinks he's bound by the pentagram," Foote said. At the telephone, where Lundgren evidently was listening to a different conversation with each ear, there was an energetic nod.

"In the old books, the figure is supposed to be a sure trap for demons and such if you can lure them into it. And the werewolf feels compelled to go only for the person whom he thinks is marked with it."

Lundgren said "Excuse me" and put his hand over the mouth-piece. "Only lasts seven days," he said.

"The compulsion? Then we'll have to get him before then."

"Well, maybe we'll sleep tonight anyhow," Doris said dubiously.

Lundgren hung up and rejoined them. "I didn't have much difficulty selling the good Father the idea," he said. "But he only has crucifixes enough for our groundfloor windows. By the way, he wants a picture of Jan in case he should turn up in the village."

"There are no existing photographs of Jarmoskowski," Newcliffe said positively. "He never allowed any to be taken. It was a headache to his concert manager."

"That's understandable," Lundgren said. "With his cell radiogens under constant stimulation any picture of him would turn out over-exposed anyhow—probably a total blank. And that in turn would expose Jan."

"Well, that's too bad but it's not irreparable," Foote said. He was glad to be of some use again. He opened Newcliffe's desk and took out a sheet of stationery and a pencil. In ten minutes he had produced a

head of Jarmoskowski in three quarter profile as he had seen him at the piano that last night so many centuries ago. Lundgren studied it.

"To the life," he said. "I'll send this over by messenger. You draw well, Paul."

Bennington laughed. "You're not telling him anything he doesn't know," he said. Nevertheless, Foote thought, there was considerably less animosity in the critic's manner.

"What now?" James asked.

"We wait," Newcliffe said. "Bennington's gun was ruined by that one handmade slug. We can't afford to have our weapons taken out of action. If I know Consolidated they'll have the machine-made jobs here tomorrow. Then we'll have some hope of getting him. Right now he's shown us he's more than a match for us in open country."

The group looked at each other. Some little understanding of what it would mean to wait through nervous days and fear-stalked nights, helpless and inactive, already showed on their faces. But there were necessities before which the demands of merely human feelings were forced to yield.

The conference broke up in silence.

For Foote, as for the rest, that night was instinct with dread, pregnant every instant with the terror of the outcry that the next moment might bring. The waning moon, greenish and sickly, reeled over the house through a sky troubled with fulgurous clouds. An insistent wind made distant wolf-howls, shook from the trees soft sounds like the padding of stealthy paws, rattled windows with the scrape of claws trying for a hold.

The atmosphere of the house, hot and stuffy because of the closed windows and reeking of garlic, was stretched to an impossible tautness with waiting. In the empty room next to Foote there was the imagined coming and going of thin ghosts and the crouched expectancy of a turned-down bed—awaiting an occupant who might depress the sheets in a shocking pattern, perhaps regardless of the tiny pitiful glint of the crucifix upon the pillow. Above him, other sleepers turned restlessly, or groaned and started up from chilling nightmares.

The boundary between the real and the unreal had been let down in his mind and in the flickering shadows of the moon and the dark errands of the ghosts there was no way of making any selection. He had entered the cobwebby blackness of the borderland between the human and the demon, where nothing is ever more than half true—or half untruth.

After awhile, on the threshold of this darkness, the blasphemous voices

of the hidden evil things beyond it began to seep through. The wind, abandoning the trees and gables, whispered and echoed the voices, counting the victims slowly as death stalked through the house.

One.

Two.

Three—closer now!

Four—the fourth sleeper struggled a little. Foote could hear a muffled creak of springs over his head.

Five.

Six—who was Six? Who is next? When?

Seven—Oh Lord, I'm next . . . I'm next . . . I'm next.

He curled into a ball, trembling. The wind died away and there was silence, tremendous silence. After a long while he uncurled, swearing at himself but not aloud—because he was afraid to hear his own voice. Cut that out, now. Foote, you bloody fool. You're like a kid hiding from the goblins. You're perfectly safe. Lundgren says so.

Mamma says so.

How the heck does Lundgren know?

He's an expert. He wrote a paper. Go ahead, be a kid. Remember your childhood faith in the printed word? All right then. Go to sleep, will you?

There goes that damned counting again.

But after awhile his worn-down nerves would be denied no longer. He slept a little but fitfully, falling in his dreams through such deep pits of evil that he awoke fighting the covers and gasping for the vitiated garlic-heavy air. There was a fetid foulness in his mouth and his heart pounded. He threw off the covers and sat up, lighting a cigarette with trembling hands and trying not to see the shadows the flame threw.

He was no longer waiting for the night to end. He had forgotten that there ever was such a thing as daylight, was waiting only for the inevitable growl that would herald the last horror. Thus it was a shock almost beyond bearing to look out the window and see the brightening of dawn over the forest.

After staring incredulously at it for a moment he snubbed out his cigarette in the candlestick—which he had been carrying around the house as if it had grown to him—and collapsed. With a sigh he was instantly in deep and dreamless sleep.

When he finally came to consciousness he was being shaken and Bennington's voice was in his ear. "Get up, man," the critic was saying.

"No, you needn't reach for the candlestick—everything's okay thus far."

Foote grinned. "It's a pleasure to see a friendly expression on your face, Bennington," he said with a faint glow of general relief.

Bennington looked a little abashed. "I misjudged you," he admitted. "I guess it takes a crisis to bring out what's really in a man so that blunt brains like mine can see it. You don't mind if I continue to dislike your latest abstractions, I trust?"

"That's your function," Foote said cheerfully. "To be a gadfly. Now what's happened?"

"Newcliffe got up early and made the rounds of the traps. We got a good-sized rabbit out of one of them and made a stew—very good—you'll see. The other one was empty but there was blood on it and on the snow. Lundgren isn't up yet but we've saved scrapings for him."

James poked his head around the doorjamb, then came in. "Hope it cripples him," he said, dextrously snaffling a cigarette from Foote's shirt pocket. "Pardon me. All the servants have deserted us but the butler, and nobody will bring cigarettes up from the village."

"My, my," said Foote. "Everyone feels so chipper. Boy, I never thought I'd be as glad to see any sunrise as I was today's."

"If you—"

There was a sound out-side. It sounded like the world's biggest teakettle. Something flitted through the sky, wheeled and came back.

"Cripes," Foote said, shading his eyes. "A big jet job. What's he doing here?"

The plane circled silently, jets cut. It lost flying speed and glided in over the golf course, struck and rolled at breakneck speed straight for the forest. At the last minute the pilot spun to a stop expertly.

"By heaven, I'll bet that's Newcliffe's bullets!"

They pounded downstairs. By the time they reached the front room the pilot was coming in with Newcliffe. A heavy case was slung between them.

Newcliffe pried the case open. Then he sighed. "Look at 'em," he said. "Nice, shiny brass cartridges, and dull-silver heads machined for perfect accuracy—yum, yum. I could just stand here and pet them. Where are you from?"

"Croydon," said the pilot. "If you don't mind, Mr. Newcliffe, the company said I was to collect from you. That's a hundred pounds for the cartridges and five hundred for me."

"Cheap enough. Hold on. I'll write you a check."

Foote whistled. He didn't know whether to be more awed by the transatlantic express service or the vast sum it had cost.

The pilot took the check and shortly thereafter the tea-kettle began to whistle again. From another huge wooden crate Newcliffe was handing out brand-new Brownings.

"Now let him come," he said grimly. "Don't worry about wasting shots—there's a full case of clips. As soon as you see him, blaze away like mad. Use it like a hose if you have to."

"Somebody go wake Chris," Bennington said. "He should have lessons too. Doris, go knock on his door like a good girl."

Doris nodded and went upstairs. "Now this stud here," Newcliffe said, "is the fire-control button. You put it in this position and the gun will fire one shot and reload. Put it here and you have to reload it yourself like any rifle. Put it here and it goes into automatic operation, firing every shell in the clip, one after the other."

"Thunder!" James said admiringly. "We could stand off an army."

"Wait a minute—there seem to be two missing."

"Those are all you unpacked," Bennington said.

"Yes but there were two older models of my own. I never used 'em because it didn't seem right to hunt with such a cannon. But I got 'em out last night on account of this trouble."

"Oh," Bennington said with an air of sudden enlightenment. "I thought that thing I had looked odd. I slept with one last night, I think Lundgren has another."

"Where is Lundgren? Doris should have had him up by now. Go see, Bennington, and get that gun."

"Isn't there a lot of recoil?" Foote asked.

"Sure. These are really meant to operate from bipods. Hold the gun at your hip, not your shoulder—what's *that*?"

"Bennington's voice," Foote said, suddenly tense. "Something must be wrong with Doris." The four of them clattered for the stairs.

They found Doris at Bennington's feet in front of Lundgren's open door. Evidently she had fainted without a sound. The critic was in the process of being very sick. On Lundgren's bed lay a crimson horror.

The throat was ripped out and the face and all the soft parts of the body had been eaten away. The right leg had been gnawed in one place all the way to the bone, which gleamed white and polished in the reassuring sunlight.

FOOTE STOOD IN THE LIVING ROOM by the piano in the full glare of all the electric lights. He hefted the B. A. R. and surveyed the remainder of his companions, who were standing in a puzzled group before him.

"No," he said, "I don't like that. I don't want you all bunched together. String out in a line, in front of me, so I can see everybody."

He grinned briefly. "Got the drop on you, didn't I? Not a rifle in sight. Of course, there's the big candlestick behind you, Newcliffe, but I can shoot quicker than you can club me." His voice grew ugly. "*And I will*, if you make it necessary. So I would advise everybody—including the women—not to make any sudden moves."

"What is this all about, Paul?" Bennington demanded angrily. "As if things aren't bad enough!"

"You'll see directly. Now line up the way I told you. *Quick!*" He moved the gun suggestively. "And remember what I said about sudden moves. It may be dark outside but I didn't turn on all the lights for nothing."

Quietly the line formed and the eyes that looked at Foote were narrowed with suspicion of madness—or worse.

"Good. Now we can talk comfortably. You see, after what happened to Chris I'm not taking any chances. That was partly his fault and partly mine. But the gods allow no one to err twice in matters like this. He paid a ghastly price for his second error—a price I don't intend to pay or to see anyone else here pay."

"Would you honor us with an explanation of this error?" Newcliffe said icily.

"Yes. I don't blame you for being angry, Tom, since I'm your guest. But you see I'm forced to treat you all alike for the moment. I was fond of Lundgren."

There was silence for a moment, then a thin indrawing of breath from Bennington. "You were fond—my Lord!" he whispered raggedly. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that Lundgren was not killed by Jarmoskowski," Foote said coldly and deliberately. "He was killed by someone else. Another werewolf. *One who is standing before me at this moment.*"

A concerted gasp went up.

"Surprised? But it's true. The error for which Chris paid so dearly, which I made too, was this—we forgot to examine everybody for injuries

after the encounter with Jan. We forgot one of the cardinal laws of lycanthropy.

"A man who survives being bitten by a werewolf himself becomes a werewolf. That's how the disease is passed on. The pincers in the saliva gets in the blood-stream, stimulates the victim's own pineal gland and—"

"But nobody was bitten, Paul," Doris said in a reasonable voice.

"Somebody was, lightly. None of you but Chris and myself could know about the bite-infection. Evidently somebody got a few small scratches, didn't think them worth mentioning, put iodine on them and forgot them—until it was too late."

There were slow movements in the line—heads turning surreptitiously, eyes glancing nervously at persons to left and right.

"Once the attack occurred," Foote said relentlessly, "Chris was the logical first victim. The expert, hence the most dangerous enemy. I wish I had thought of this before lunch. I might have seen which one of you was uninterested in his lunch. In any event Chris' safeguards against letting Jarmoskowski in also keep you from getting out. You won't leave this room ever again."

He gritted his teeth and brought himself back into control. "All right," he said. "This is the showdown. Everybody hold up both hands in plain view."

Almost instantly there was a ravening wolf in the room.

Only Foote, who could see at a glance the order of the people in the line, knew who it was. The frightful tragedy of it struck him such a blow that the gun dropped nervelessly from his hands. He wept convulsively. The monster lunged for his throat like a reddish projectile.

Newcliffe's hand darted back, grasped the candlestick. He leapt forward in a swift, catlike motion and brought it down across the werewolf's side. Ribs burst with a horrible splintering sound. The beast spun, snarling with agony. Newcliffe hit it again across the backbone. It fell, screaming, fangs slashing the air.

Three times, with concentrated viciousness, Newcliffe struck at its head. Then it cried out once in an almost familiar voice—and died.

Slowly the cells of its body groped back toward their natural positions. The awful crawling metamorphosis was never completed. But the hairy-haunched thing with the crushed skull which sprawled at Newcliffe's feet was recognizable.

It had been Caroline Newcliffe.

There was a frozen tableau of wax figures in the yellow lamplight. Tears coursed along Foote's palms, dropped from under them, fell si-

lently to the carpet. After awhile he dropped his hands. Bennington's face was gray with illness but rigidly expressionless like a granite statue. James' back was against the wall. He watched the anomalous corpse as if waiting for some new movement.

As for Newcliffe he had no expression at all. He merely stood where he was, the bloody candlestick held loosely in a limp hand.

His eyes were quite empty.

After a moment Doris walked over to Newcliffe and touched his shoulder compassionately. The contact seemed to let something out of him. He shrank visibly into himself, shoulders slumping, his whole body withering visibly into a dry husk.

The candlestick thumped against the floor, rocked wildly on its base, toppled across the body. As it struck, Foote's cigarette butt, which had somehow remained in it all day, tumbled out and rolled crazily along the carpet.

"Tom," Doris said softly. "Come away now. There's nothing you can do."

"Blood," he said emptily. "She had a cut. On her hand. Handled the scrapings from the trap—my trap. I did it. Just a breadknife cut from making canapes. I did it."

"No you didn't. Tom. Let's get some rest." She took his hand. He followed her obediently, stumbling a little as his blood-spattered shoes scuffed over the thick rug, his breath expelling from his lungs with a soft whisper. The two disappeared up the stairs.

Bennington bolted for the kitchen sink.

Foote sat down on the piano bench, his worn face taut with dried tears, and picked at the dusty keys. The lightly-struck notes aroused James. He crossed the room and looked down at Foote.

"You did well," the novelist said shakily. "Don't condemn yourself, Paul."

Foote nodded. He felt—nothing. Nothing at all.

"The body?"

"Yes. I suppose so." He got up from the bench. Together they carried the tragic corpse out through the house to the greenhouse.

"We should leave her here," Foote said with a faint return of his old irony. "Here's where the wolfbane bloomed and started the whole business."

"Poetic justice, I suppose." James said. "But I don't think it's wise. Tom has a toolshed at the other end that isn't steam heated. It should be cold enough."

Gently they placed the body on the cement floor, laying some gunny-sacks under it. "In the morning," Foote said, "we can have someone come for her."

"How about legal trouble?" James said, frowning. "Here's a woman whose skull has been crushed with a blunt instrument —"

"I think I can get Lundgren's priest to help us there," Foote said somberly. "They have some authority to make death certificates in this state. Besides, James — is that a woman? Inarguably it isn't Caroline."

James looked sidewise at the hairy, contorted haunches. "Yes. It's — legally it's nothing. I see your point."

Together they went back into the house. "Jarmoskowski?" James said.

"Not tonight. We're all too tired and sick. And we do seem to be safe enough in here. Chris saw to that."

Whatever James had to say in reply was lost in the roar of an automatic rifle somewhere over their heads, exhausting its shots in a quick stream. After a moment there was another burst of ten. Footsteps echoed. Then Bennington came bouncing down the stairs.

"Watch out tonight," he panted. "He's around. I saw him come out of the woods in wolf form. I emptied the clip but missed and he went back again. I sprayed another ten rounds around where I saw him go in but I don't think I hit him."

"Where were you shooting from?"

"The top of the tower." His face was very grim. "Went up for a last look around and there he was. I hope he comes tonight, I want to be the one who kills him."

"How is Tom?"

"Bad. Doesn't seem to know where he is or what he's doing. Well, goodnight. Keep your eyes peeled."

James nodded and followed him upstairs. Foote remained in the empty room a few minutes longer, looking thoughtfully at the splotch of blood on the priceless Persian carpet. Then he felt of his face and throat, looked at his hands, arms and legs, inside his shirt. Not so much as a scratch — Tom had seen that.

So hard not to hate these afflicted people, so impossible to remember that lycanthropy was a disease like any other! Caroline, like the man in *The Red Laugh*, had been noble-hearted and gentle and had wished no one evil. Yet —

Maybe God is on the side of the werewolves.

The blasphemy of an exhausted mind. Yet he could not put it from

him. Suppose Jarmoskowski should conquer his compulsion and lie out of sight until the seven days were over. Then he could disappear. It was a big country. It would not be necessary for him to kill all his victims—just those he actually needed for food. But he could nip a good many. Every other one, say.

And from wherever he lived the circle of lycanthropy would grow and widen and engulf—

Maybe God had decided that proper humans had made a mess of running the world, had decided to give the *nosferatu*, the undead, a chance at it. Perhaps the human race was on the threshold of that darkness into which he had looked throughout last night.

He ground his teeth and made an exasperated noise. Shock and exhaustion would drive him as crazy as Newcliffe if he kept this up.

He went around the room, making sure that all the windows were tightly closed and the crucifixes in place, turning out the lights as he went. The garlic was getting rancid—it smelled like mercaptan—but he was too tired to replace it. He flicked out the last light, picked up the candlestick and went out into the hall.

As he passed Doris' room, he noticed that the door was ajar. Inside two voices murmured. Remembering what he had heard before he stopped to eavesdrop.

It was years later that Foote found out exactly what had happened at the very beginning. Doris, physically exhausted by the hideous events of the day, emotionally drained by tending the childlike Newcliffe, feeding him from a spoon and seeing him into bed, had fallen asleep almost immediately.

It was a sleep dreamless except for a vague, dull undercurrent of despair. When the light tapping against the window-panes finally reached her consciousness she had no idea how long she had slumbered.

She struggled to a sitting position and forced her eyelids up. Across the room the moonlight, gleaming in patches against the rotting snow outside, glared through the window. Silhouetted against it was a tall human figure. She could not see its face but there was no mistaking the red glint of the eyes. She clutched for the rifle and brought it awkwardly into position.

Jarmoskowski did not dodge. He moved his arms out a little way away from his body, palms forward in a gesture that looked almost supplicating, and waited. Indecisively she lowered the gun again. Was he inviting death?

As she lowered the weapon she saw that the stud was in the continuous-fire position and carefully she shifted it to *repeat*. She was afraid of the recoil Newcliffe had mentioned, felt surer of her target if she could throw one shot at a time at it.

Jarmoskowski tapped again and motioned with his finger. Reasoning that he would come in if he were able, she took time out to get into her housecoat. Then, holding her finger against the trigger, she went to the window. It was closed tightly and a crucifix, suspended from a silk thread, hung exactly in the center of it. She checked it, and then opened one of the small panes directly above Jarmoskowski's head.

"Hello, Doris," he said softly.

"Hello," She was more uncertain than afraid. Was this actually happening or just the recurrent nightmare? "What do you want? I should shoot you. Can you tell me why I shouldn't?"

"Yes I can. Otherwise I wouldn't have risked exposing myself. That's a nasty-looking weapon."

"There are ten silver bullets in it."

"I know it. I've seen Brownings before. I would be a good target for you too, so I have no hope of escape—my nostrils are full of rosemary." He smiled ruefully. "And Lundgren and Caroline are dead and I am responsible. I deserve to die. That is why I am here."

"You'll get your wish, Jan," she said. "You have some other reason, I know. I will back my wits against yours. I want to ask you questions."

"Ask."

"You have your evening clothes on. Paul said they changed with you. How is that possible?"

"But a wolf has clothes," Jarmoskowski said. "He is not naked like a man. And surely Chris must have spoken of the effect of the pineal upon the cell radiogens. These little bodies act upon any organic matter, including wool or cotton. When I change my clothes change with me. I can hardly say how, for it is in the blood, like musicianship. Either you can or you can't. But they change."

His voice took on a darkly somber tone. "Lundgren was right throughout. This werewolfery is now nothing but a disease. It is not pro-survival. Long ago there must have been a number of mutations which brought the pineal gland into use.

"None of them survived but the werewolves and these are dying. Someday the pineal will come into better use and all men will be able to modify their forms without this terrible madness as a penalty. For us, the lycanthropes, the failures, nothing is left.

"It is not good for a man to wander from country to country, knowing that he is a monster to his fellow-men and cursed eternally by his God—if he can claim a God. I went through Europe, playing the piano and giving pleasure, meeting people, making friends—and always, sooner or later, there were whisperings, and strange looks and dawning horror.

"And whether I was hunted down for the beast I was or whether there was merely a vague gradually-growing revulsion, they drove me out. Hatred, silver bullets, crucifixes—they are all the same in the end.

"Sometimes, I could spend several months without incident in some one place and my life would take on a veneer of normality. I could attend to my music and have people about me that I liked and be—human. Then the wolfsbane bloomed and the pollen freighted the air and when the moon shone down on that flower my blood surged with the thing I have within me.

"And then I made apologies to my friends and went north to Sweden, where Lundgren was and where spring was much later. I loved him and I think he missed the truth about me until night before last. I was careful.

"Once or twice I did *not* go North and then the people who had been my friends would be hammering silver behind my back and waiting for me in dark corners. After years of this few places in Europe would have me. With my reputation as a musician spread darker rumors.

"Towns I had never visited closed their gates to me without a word. Concert halls were booked up too many months in advance for me to use them, inns and hotels were filled indefinitely, people were too busy to talk to me, to listen to my playing, to write me any letters.

"I have been in love. That—I cannot describe.

"And then I came to this country. Here no one believes in the werewolf. I sought scientific help—not from Lundgren, because I was afraid I should do him some harm. But here I thought someone would know enough to deal with what I had become.

"It was not so. The primitive hatred of my kind lies at the heart of the human as it lies at the heart of the dog. There was no help for me.

"I am here to ask for an end to it."

Slow tears rolled over Doris' cheeks. The voice faded away indefinitely. It did not seem to end at all but rather to retreat into some limbo where men could not hear it. Jarmoskowski stood silently in the moonlight, his eyes burning bloodily, a somber sullen scarlet.

Doris said, "Jan—Jan, I am sorry, I am so sorry. What can I do?"

"Shoot."

"I—can't!"

"Please, Doris."

The girl was crying uncontrollably. "Jan, don't. I can't. You know I can't. Go away, *please* go away."

Jarmoskowski said, "Then come with me, Doris. Open the window and come with me."

"Where?"

"Does it matter? You have denied me the death I ask. Would you deny me this last desperate love, would you deny your own love, your own last and deepest desire? It is too late now, too late for you to pretend revulsion. Come with me."

He held out his hands.

"Say goodbye," he said. "Goodbye to these self-righteous humans. I will give you of my blood and we will range the world, wild and uncontrollable, the last of our race. They will remember us, I promise you."

"Jan—"

"I am here. Come now."

Like a somnambulist she swung the panes out. Jarmoskowski did not move but looked first at her, then at the crucifix. She lifted one end of the thread and let the little thing tinkle to the floor.

"After us there shall be no darkness comparable to our darkness," Jarmoskowski said. "Let them rest—let the world rest."

He sprang into the room with so sudden, so feral a motion that he seemed hardly to have moved at all. From the doorway the automatic rifle yammered with demoniac ferocity. The impact of the slugs hurled Jarmoskowski back against the wall. Foote lowered the smoking muzzle and took one step into the room.

"Too late, Jan," he said stonily.

Doris wailed like a little girl awakened from a dream. Jarmoskowski's lips moved but there was not enough left of his lungs. The effort to speak brought a bloody froth to his mouth. He stood for an instant, stretched out a hand toward the girl. Then the fingers clenched convulsively and the long body folded.

He smiled, put aside that last of all his purposes and died.



The Phantom Ship

by Captain Frederick Marrayat

This concluding episode from a longer story can stand by itself, we feel; CAPTAIN FREDERICK MARRAYAT (1792-1848) is mostly noted for sea stories, but he did some weird tales as well. Perhaps some reader can tell us whether the present tale is the earliest use in English fiction of the legend of the Flying Dutchman.

A BANK OF CLOUDS ROSE UP FROM THE EASTWARD, with a rapidity that to the seamen's eyes was unnatural, and it soon covered the whole firmament; the sun was obscured, and all was one deep and unnatural gloom; the wind subsided; and the ocean was hushed. It was not exactly dark, but the heavens were covered with one red haze, which gave an appearance as if the world was in a state of conflagration.

In the cabin the increased darkness was first observed by Philip, who went on deck; he was followed by the captain and passengers, who were in a state of amazement. It was unnatural and incomprehensible.

"Now, Holy Virgin, protect us! what can this be?" exclaimed the captain, in a fright. "Holy Saint Antonio, protect us! but this is awful."

"There—there!" shouted the sailors, pointing to the beam of the vessel. Every eye looked over the gunnel to witness what had occasioned such exclamations. Philip, Schriften, and the captain were side-by-side. On the beam of the ship, not more than two cables' length distant, they

beheld slowly rising out of the water the tapering masthead and spars of another vessel. She rose, and rose, gradually; her top-masts and top-sail yards, with the sails set, next made their appearance; higher and higher she rose up from the element. Her lower masts and rigging, and, lastly, her hull showed itself above the surface. Still she rose up, till her ports, with her guns, and at last the whole of her floatage was above water, and there she remained close to them, with her main yard squared, and hove to.

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed the captain, breathless. "I have known ships to *go down*, but never to *come up* before. Now will I give one thousand candles, of ten ounces each, to the shrine of the Virgin, to save us in this trouble. One thousand wax candles! Hear me, blessed lady, ten ounces each! Gentlemen," cried the captain to the passengers, who stood aghast, "why don't you promise?—promise, I say *promise*, at all events."

"The Phantom Ship—the *Flying Dutchman*," shrieked Schriften. "I told you so, Philip Vanderdecken. There is your father. He, he!"

Philip's eyes had remained fixed on the vessel; he perceived that they were lowering down a boat from her quarter. "It is possible," thought he, "I shall now be permitted," and put his hand into his bosom and grasped the relic.

The gloom now increased, so that the strange vessel's hull could but just be discovered through the murky atmosphere. The seamen and passengers threw themselves down on their knees, and invoked their saints. The captain ran down for a candle, to light before the image of St. Antonio, which he took out of its shrine and kissed with much apparent affection and devotion, and then replaced.

Shortly afterwards, the splash of oars was heard alongside, and a voice calling out, "I say, my good people, give us a rope from forward."

No one answered, or complied with the request. Schriften only went up to the captain, and told him that if they offered to send letters they must not be received, or the vessel would be doomed, and all would perish.

A man now made his appearance from over the gunnel, at the gang-way. "You might as well have let me have a side-rope, my hearties," said he, as he stepped on deck. "Where is the captain?"

"Here," replied the captain, trembling from head to foot. The man who accosted him appeared a weather-beaten seaman, dressed in a fur cap and canvas petticoats; he held some letters in his hand.

"What do you want?" at last screamed the captain.

"Yes—what do you want?" continued Schriften. "He! he!"

"What, you here, pilot?" observed the man. "Well—I thought you had gone to Davy's locker long enough ago."

"He! he!" replied Schriften, turning away.

"Why, the fact is, captain, we have had very foul weather, and we wish to send letters home; I do believe that we shall never get round this cape."

"I can't take them," cried the captain.

"Can't take them! well, it's very odd, but every ship refuses to take our letters. It's very unkind; seamen should have a feeling for brother seamen, especially in distress. God knows, we wish to see our wives and families again; and it would be a matter of comfort to them if they only could hear from us."

"I cannot take your letters—the saints preserve us!" replied the captain.

"We have been a long while out," said the seaman, shaking his head.

"How long?" inquired the captain, not knowing what to say.

"We can't tell; our almanack was blown overboard, and we have lost our reckoning. We never have our latitude exact now, for we cannot tell the sun's dedination for the right day."

"Let me see your letters," said Philip, advancing and taking them out of the seaman's hands.

"They must not be touched," screamed Schriften.

"Out, monster!" replied Philip, "who dares interfere with me?"

"Doomed—doomed—doomed!" shrieked Schriften, running up and down the deck, and then breaking into a wild fit of laughter.

"Touch not the letters," said the captain, trembling as if in an ague fit.

Philip made no reply, but held his hand out for the letters.

"Here is one from our second mateto his wife at Amsterdam, who lives on Waser Quay."

"Waser Quay has long been gone, my good friend; there is now a large dock for ships where it once was," replied Philip.

"Impossible!" replied the man. "Here is another from the boatswain to his father, who lives in the old market-place."

"The old market-place has long been pulled down, and there now stands a church upon the spot."

"Impossible!" replied the seaman. "Here is another from myself to my sweetheart, Vrow Ketser—with money to buy her a new brooch."

Philip shook his head. "I remember seeing an old lady of that name buried some thirty years ago."

"Impossible! I left her young and blooming. Here's one for the house of Slutz and Co., to whom the ship belongs."

"There's no such house now," replied Philip, "but I have heard that, many years ago, there was a firm of that name."

"Impossible! you must be laughing at me. Here is a letter from our captain to his son—"

"Give it me," cried Philip, seizing the letter.

He was about to break the seal, when Schriften snatched it out of his hand, and threw it over the lee gunnel.

"That's a scurvy trick for an old shipmate," observed the seaman.

Schriften made no reply, but catching up the other letters, which Philip had laid down on the capstan, he hurled them after the first. The strange seaman shed tears, and walked again to the side.

"It's very hard—very unkind," observed he, as he descended; "the time may come when you may wish that your family should know your situation."

So saying, he disappeared. In a few seconds was heard the sound of the oars, retreating from the ship.

"Holy Saint Antonio!" exclaimed the captain. "I am lost in wonder and fright. Stewart, bring me up the arrack."

The steward ran down for the bottle; being so much alarmed as his captain, he helped himself before he brought it up to his commander.

"Now," said the captain, after keeping his mouth for two minutes to the bottle, and draining it to the bottom, "what is to be done next?"

"I'll tell you," said Schriften, going up to him. "That man there has a charm hung round his neck. Take it from him, and throw it overboard and your ship will be saved. If not, it will be lost with every soul on board."

"Yes, yes, it's all right, depend upon it," cried the sailors.

"Fools!" replied Philip, "do you believe that wretch? Did you not hear the man who came on board recognize him, and call him shipmate? He is the party whose presence on board will prove so unfortunate."

"Yes, yes," cried the sailors, "it's all right; the man did call him shipmate."

"I tell you it's all wrong," cried Schriften. "That is the man. Let him give up the charm."

"Yes, yes; let him give up the charm," cried the sailors, and they rushed upon Philip.

Philip started back to where the captain stood. "Madmen, know ye what ye are about? It is the holy cross that I wear round my neck.

Throw it overboard if you dare, and your souls are lost for ever," and he took the relic from his bosom and showed it to the captain.

"No, no, men," exclaimed the captain, who was now more settled in his nerves, "that won't do—the saints protect us."

The seamen, however, became clamorous; one portion were for throwing Schriften overboard, the other for throwing Philip. At last, the point was decided by the captain, who directed the small skiff hanging astern to be lowered down, and ordered both Philip and Schriften to get into it. The seamen approved of this arrangement, as it satisfied both parties. Philip made no objection; Schriften screamed and fought, but he was tossed into the boat. There he remained trembling in the stern-sheets, while Philip, who had seized the sculls, pulled away from the vessel in the direction of the Phantom Ship.

In a few minutes, the vessel which Philip and Schriften had left was no longer to be discerned through the thick haze; the Phantom Ship was still in sight, but at a much greater distance from them than she was before. Philip pulled hard towards her, but although hove to, she appeared to increase her distance from the boat. For a short time he paused on his oars, to regain his breath, when Schriften rose up and took his seat in the stern-sheets of the boat.

"You may pull and pull, Philip Vanderdecken," observed he, "but you will not gain that ship. No, no, that cannot be. We may have a long cruise together, but you will be as far from your object at the end of it, as you are now at commencement. Why don't you throw me overboard again? You would be all the lighter. He! he!"

"I threw you overboard in a state of frenzy," replied Philip, "when you attempted to force from me my relic."

"And have I not endeavoured to make others take it from you this very day? Have I not? He! he!"

"You have," rejoined Philip, "but I am now convinced that you are an unhappy as myself, and that in what you are doing, you are only following your destiny, as I am mine. Why and wherefore I cannot tell, but we are both engaged in the same mystery; if the success of my endeavours depends upon guarding the relic, the success of yours depends upon your obtaining it, and defeating my purpose by so doing. In this matter we are both agents, and you have been, as far as my mission is concerned, my most active enemy. But, Schriften, I have not forgotten, and never will, that you kindly *did advise* my poor Amine; that you prophesied to her what would be her fate, if she did not listen to your counsel; that you were no enemy of hers, although you have been and

are still mine. Although my enemy, for her sake I *forgive you*, and will not attempt to harm you."

"You do then forgive your enemy, Philip Vanderdecken?" replied Schriften, mournfully, "for such I acknowledge myself to be."

"I do, *with all my heart, with all my soul*," replied Philip.

"Then have you conquered me, Philip Vanderdecken; you have now made me your friend, and your wishes are about to be accomplished. You would know who I am. Listen. When your father, defying the Almighty's will, in his rage took my life, he was vouchsafed a chance of his doom being cancelled, through the merits of his son. I had also my appeal, which was for *vengeance*. It was granted that I should remain on Earth, and thwart your will. That as long as we were enemies, you should not succeed; but that when you had conformed to the highest attribute of Christianity, proved on the holy cross, that of *forgiving your enemy*, your task should be fulfilled. Philip Vanderdecken, you have forgiven your enemy, and both our destinies are now accomplished."

As Schriften spoke, Philip's eyes were fixed on him. He extended his hand to Philip—it was taken; and as it was pressed, the form of the pilot wasted as it were into the air, and Philip found himself alone.

"Father of mercy, I thank thee," said Philip, "that my task is done, and that I again may meet my Amine."

Philip then pulled towards the Phantom Ship, and found that she no longer appeared to leave: on the contrary, every minute he was nearer and nearer, and, at last, he threw in his oars, climbed up her side and gained her deck.

The crew of the vessel crowded round him.

"Your captain," said Philip, "I must speak with your captain."

"Who shall I say, sir?" demanded one who appeared to be the first mate.

"Who?" replied Philip. "Tell him his son would speak to him, his son, Philip Vanderdecken."

Shouts of laughter from the crew followed this answer of Philip's; and the mate, as soon as they ceased, observed, with a smile, "You forget, sir; perhaps you would say his father."

"Tell him his son, if you please," replied Philip. "Take no note of grey hairs."

"Well, sir, here he is coming forward," replied the mate, stepping aside, and pointing to the captain.

"What is all this?" inquired the captain.

"Are you Philip Vanderdecken, the captain of this vessel?"

"I am, sir," replied the other.

"You appear not to know me! But how can you? You saw me but when I was only three years old; yet may you remember a letter which you gave to your wife."

"Ha!" replied the captain; "and who, then, are you?"

"Time has stopped with you, but with those who live in the world he stops not; and for those who pass a life of misery, he hurries on still faster. In me behold your son, Philip Vanderdecken, who has obeyed your wishes; and, after a life of such peril and misery as few have passed, has at last fulfilled his vow, and now offers to his father the precious relic that he required to kiss."

Philip drew out the relic, and held it towards his father. As if a flash of lightning had passed through his mind, the captain of the vessel started back, clasped his hands, fell on his knees, and wept.

"My son, my son!" exclaimed he, rising and throwing himself into Philip's arms; "my eyes are opened — the Almighty knows how long they have been obscured."

Embracing each other, they walked aft, away from the men, who were still crowded at the gangway.

"My son, my noble son, before the charm is broken — before we resolve, as we must, into the elements, oh! let me kneel in thanksgiving and contrition; my son, my noble son, receive a father's thanks," exclaimed Vanderdecken. Then with tears of joy and penitence he humbly addressed himself to that Being whom he once so awfully defied.

The elder Vanderdecken knelt down; Philip did the same; still embracing each other with one arm, while they raised on high the other, and prayed.

For the last time the relic was taken from the bosom of Philip and handed to his father — and his father raised his eyes to heaven and kissed it. And as he kissed it, the long tapering upper spars of the Phantom vessel, the yards and sails that were set, fell into dust, fluttered in the air, and sank upon the wave. The mainmast, foremast, bowsprit, everything above the deck, crumbled into atoms and disappeared.

Again he raised the relic to his lips, and the work of destruction continued — the heavy iron guns sank through the decks and disappeared; the crew of the vessel (who were looking on) crumbled down into skeletons, and dust, and fragments of ragged garments; and there were none left on board the vessel in the semblance of life but the father and son.

Once more did he put the sacred emblem to his lips, and the beams and timbers separated, the decks of the vessel slowly sank, and the

remnants of the hull floated upon the water; and as the father and son—the one young and vigorous, the other old and decrepit—still kneeling, still embracing, with their hands raised to heaven, sank slowly under the deep blue wave, the lurid sky was for a moment illuminated by a lightning cross.

Then did the clouds which obscured the heavens roll away swift as thought—the sun again burst out in all its splendor—the rippling waves appeared to dance with joy. The screaming sea-gull again whirled in the air, and the scared albatross once more slumbered on the wing. The porpoise tumbled and tossed in his sportive play, the albicore and dolphin leaped from the sparkling sea. All nature smiled as if it rejoiced that the charm was dissolved for ever, and that the Phantom Ship was no more.

The Reckoning

Only once before in MOH's career has a story been put in first place on the first ballot received, and got enough high votes so that we had an unbroken line of "1"s (encircled in blue so I can tell at a glance who is in the lead at any particular time) straight across the sheet. Not that every voter put this story in first place, but rather that the "outstanding" votes more than made up, in the scoring, for those of you who rated it lower; and one voter disliked it, so that I see a single red mark on the sheet. The other story which had this distinction was Edmond Hamilton's *Monster of Mamurth*. But our present author maintained his lead with approximately one-third again as many ballots coming in. To end the suspense, then, here are the finals:

(1) *The Abyss* (part one), David H. Keller, M.D.; (2) *Leapers*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; (3) *The Thirteenth Floor*, Douglas M. Dold; (4) *The Death Mask*, Mrs. H. D. Everett; (5) *One by One*, Richard M. Hodgens.

A half dozen readers thought the Finlay cover too sexy, but a substantial majority approved. And, once again, every story received at least one first place vote and at least one tomato. .

When Dead Gods Wake

by Victor Rousseau

After an eleven-installment series, dealing with the psychic adventures of Dr. Ivan Brodsky, which ran in *WEIRD TALES* from September 1926 to July 1927, VICTOR ROUSSEAU was not seen with weird fiction again until 1931, in the second issue of *STRANGE TALES*. You applauded his long novelet, *The Curse of Amen-Ra*, which appeared in the sixth issue of ST (and #19, January 1968 MOH); here is the earlier and shorter tale. Both just add reason for regrets that the life of Clayton's weird fiction venture was so short.

"MEEST MAITLAND HIM COME SOON. Him say for you to wait," said the grave Indian boy who opened the door to us.

He led the way up two flights of stairs and ushered us into the long room that was Francis Maitland's own museum. It was in darkness, but with a soft, sibilant apology, the Indian youth switched on the lights. They hung at intervals all along the room, disclosing Maitland's trophies—the stone figures that he had dug out of the pyramid of Xoctli, the inscribed lava blocks that had proved veritable stumbling-blocks to philologists the world over, the stone calendar and sun dial showing the Mayan astronomical year, show-cases filled with ancient jewelry, and safes in which reposed still more valuable finds.

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The museum occupied the second story of the old house in Bronxville. Maitland, who was a bachelor of forty-five, owned the building, and resided there in the rare periods when he was back in the United States after one of his exploring trips in Central America. Reserved, scholarly and retiring, totally unknown to the public at large, Maitland was the world's leading authority on the Mayan civilization in 1931.

I was one of his few intimates, if the word could be used, and our association dated back to our schooldays. For all that, we met seldom, and I had only been in the museum twice before.

Adachi, the slim, spectacled Japanese, had made a special journey from Yokohama to see the results of Maitland's latest Guatemalan expedition, and I had met him at his hotel, at Maitland's own suggestion, to bring him around. I had found Felix Garth with Adachi, and both men had been extremely reticent.

Of course I knew Garth by reputation. He was the only American Member of the Institut Metapsychique of Paris, and an authority on ectoplasm, materializations, paraffin, ghost-gloves and astral cantilevers. Since Maitland had always struck me as a well-balanced individual, I had wondered what Garth was doing with Adachi, for he evidently expected to accompany us.

Adachi, peered after the youth's departing form. "That fellow is a Mayan," he said. "Unmistakably so. Our friend must have brought him back with him from Central America."

A door opened at the other end of the museum, and Maitland came forward. He was wearing evening clothes; he had grown a brown, peaked beard since I had last seen him, and he looked handsomer, more virile—I might say more primitive—a fine figure of a man in early middle life. He greeted us warmly as I presented my companions, and I saw him shoot a glance of quick surmise at Garth. It was evident that Adachi had brought Garth with him at Maitland's own suggestion; there must have been some correspondence. Garth hadn't just crashed in.

There followed a few moments of desultory conversation. "Yes, I've been back two months," said Maitland, "but I've been very busy. My trophies are still on their way, all except the one I'm going to show you. I brought it back on the same ship with me—wouldn't trust it on any other. Either we'd land in New York together, or we'd go down together."

He laughed in a strange, embarrassed way. I saw Garth glance at him sharply for a moment, as he had previously glanced at Garth. Then and there I knew that Maitland had been in communication with Garth

about the trophy, whatever it was. But Maitland was already leading the way toward the farther end of the room.

"There it is," he said, with a wave of his hand.

What I saw was one of those single blocks of stone with the upper part crudely carved into the representation of a human face, and hieroglyphics below—a Mayan idol, such as may be seen in most of the large museums. The face had the customary leer that primitive Mayan art shows, something at once murderous and cheap, as if an East Side gangster had liberated his soul in sculpture. This was just one of the repulsive gods the race had worshipped.

In front of this block, and forming part of it, was another mass of stone, about as large, but square instead of oblong, and reaching to the middle of the idol's body. Two roughly carved hands rested upon it, and it was hollowed upon the surface into a sort of shallow bowl, with three channels in it.

"A Mayan sacrificial stone," said Adachi as if to signify that he saw nothing remarkable about it.

Maitland pointed to the hieroglyphics carved into its base. "I have hopes," he answered, "that this will solve the mystery of the Mayan language. Some of these symbols are identical with those that were interpreted by Father Ignatius Gomez in the seventeenth century. You have seen his book in the Vatican? If I am right, this stone provides the key that will unlock many secrets of the Mayan civilization."

His words were impressive; but then he laughed in that embarrassed way again.

And then, in the light from the electric bulb that hung over the stone block, I saw that Maitland was, in some indescribable way, changed. Something had happened to him in the Guatemalan jungles. He had gone out a matter-of-fact scientist, he had come back physically more virile, more forceful, and yet mentally he was not quite the same.

The Indian youth came gliding into the light. He went up to Maitland and whispered something, and Maitland nodded. I had not seen the Indian well before. Now I noticed that his face was an aristocratic one, aquiline, dignified, completely self-possessed. And I was amazed to see the ripple and play of muscle through the cotton singlet visible beneath his open jacket. Slight as he looked, the boy was a tawny Hercules.

"Yes, stay here, Pophonoc," said Maitland. He turned to us three again with his embarrassed laugh. "Pophonoc is anxious about the god," he said. "It's rather a curious story. I found this block at the head of a flight of stone steps in an utter wilderness. It's a sacrificial stone, of

course, as you said, Mr. Adachi. The god is that of lightning and earthquakes, who had to be appeased every so often with the blood of a human being. He was also, as you know, the python god. Probably he had to be fed whenever the half-tame pythons that the priests kept needed a meal themselves. You can see the symbol, Kent," he added to me.

Suddenly, as if they had only that moment appeared, I saw the two sculptured pythons, one on either side of the god's leering face. If the god's face was crude, the two pythons were marvelously realistic, from the end of the undulating bodies to the cruel, venomous heads.

"Pophonoc was the only human being anywhere near," continued Maitland. "So far as I was able to gather, he was the hereditary guardian of the god. Probably the charge had descended from father to son for several hundred years, and one of Pophonoc's ancestors was the last priest who actually performed the sacrifices. He made so much fuss when I sought to remove the idol, that I brought him along with it, and now he's quite contented."

Again came Maitland's strange embarrassed laugh.

Well, gentlemen," he continued, "what I have asked you here for will sound like utter folly. But I happened to have some curious experiences in the Guatemala jungles which rather shook me out of my materialistic scientific complacency. Pophonoc, as I told you, made such fuss at being separated from the idol, that I had to bring him along as a sort of compromise arrangement. He's made an excellent servant, but, since he's picked up a little English, he's tried to explain just what a bad mistake I made in bringing the god along with me.

"I'll pass over the horde of pythons that seemed to dog our footsteps all through the jungle, and the earthquake that rocked the port of embarkation, though our hotel was knocked down flat, all except the extension in which we were housed. I'm not superstitious. But a very odd thing happened the other night. My dog, Ajax, is just a mongrel that I've had ten years, and I'd been boarding him in Bronxville while I was away. They got him!"

Suddenly I realized that, for all his matter-of-fact way of speaking, Maitland was laboring under intense emotion. There was a wild look in his eyes, and his speech was labored.

"I sleep in a room off the museum," he continued, pointing toward the door by which he had entered. "The dog slept on the floor beside my bed. I had locked the door. I swear I'd locked it. I always do, from force of habit. You have to in those tropical ports. When I awoke suddenly, Ajax was gone.

"I switched on the light, looked about the room, unlocked the door and came in here, much mystified. Gentlemen, my dog lay in this stone bowl, every bone in his body not merely broken, but almost pulverized. And only a python could have done that!"

He paused, then added, "Look at the stone pythons on the carved block, gentlemen! One of them's had a meal! Look at it and see! It was like the other before the dog was killed. It's swollen, swollen, swollen!"

I looked again. It was perfectly true that one of the pythons was abnormally swollen midway along the sinuous stonebody, while the other retained the normal serpent shape. I hadn't noticed that before. But Maitland's explanation was of course preposterous. And I'm a pretty level-headed sort of man in the face of such things.

I looked back at Maitland and saw that he was laughing again. But now I realized that that was not the laugh of a sane man.

Garth's voice broke the silence, "I may as well tell you, Mr. Kent," he addressed me, "that I have been in communication with Mr. Maitland since his return. Our first meeting was accidental, but I was able to offer him a certain line of investigation which he is inclined to follow. Mr. Maitland wanted you, as an old friend, to be present, but he was uncertain how you would regard the matter."

"I may as well reply," I said, "that I am not favorably inclined toward spiritism. I am not so foolish as to deny that there is probably a substratum of truth beneath some of those phenomena, but repeated encounters with fraud disgusts me. Furthermore, whatever may be the underlying causes of those phenomena which are true, I can approach from the viewpoint of a scientist. That is to say, I should regard them as demonstrating the existence of some unknown laws of nature."

Garth laid his hand on my shoulder. "Spoken like a man of science, Kent," he answered. "Yours is exactly the type of mind we need and so rarely find. If you are not unwilling to participate in our seance tonight—"

"Seance?" I returned.

"The Indian, like all votaries of the priesthood among savage races, is a medium. Now don't get on your high horse, Kent," Garth added, smiling in a way that robbed his words of any offensiveness. "I mean that he has the faculty of going into that cataleptic state which we call trance. We can count you in?"

"Surely," I answered, "if I may reserve my own conclusions. But is the Indian willing to cooperate?"

"He is more than willing," answered Garth. "He has been trying to

persuade Mr. Maitland to cooperate with him, but it is only recently that he has acquired enough English to make his wish understood."

"I hope you'll join us, Kent," said Maitland nervously. "I—I'm counting on you, as an old friend. I—" He turned to Garth with a helpless gesture. "Please take full charge of the proceedings, Mr. Garth," he said.

Garth nodded, turned, and beckoned to Pophonoc, who had glided up to our little group. Pophonoc nodded. I was again struck by the boy's air of dignity and self-repression.

Four chairs were brought and spaced in a semi-circle about the altar. Pophonoc vanished and reappeared. He had cast off his western clothing and wore nothing but a loin-cloth of some native material. And I had not been mistaken in my estimate of his physical strength. His splendid copper-colored body was one surge of rippling muscles.

"Did you ever see such a man, Mr. Garth?" I whispered. "He'd make his fortune as a physical culture instructor."

Garth inclined his head slowly, but did not answer me. On my other side, Adachi was bending forward, watching the Indian. Pophonoc had fallen on his knees, and, with extended arms was invoking the stone idol in his native language; in slow, rolling, sonorous syllables that, in spite of my desire to remain unprejudiced, succeeded in creating a sense of awe in me.

Then an extraordinary thing happened. As I said, Pophonoc had worn nothing but a small loin-cloth, and yet, of a sudden, he held a squawking fowl in his left hand, while his right held a sharp stone sacrificial knife. He placed the bird on the stone bowl. It remained there, silent now, head down, as if hypnotized. Pophonoc turned and spoke to Maitland, who addressed us in strange, jerky tones.

"He asks for darkness and strict silence during the experiment," he said. "Kent, will you take charge of the lights? I have installed a switch that controls them all. You'll see it hanging down beside the bowl."

I bent forward and saw a slender cord with a push-button in a handle at the end. I picked it up. "Ready?" I asked Maitland.

He nodded, and I pressed the button. Instantly all the lights in the museum went out. We could see nothing now except the faint reflection from the streets against the drawn shade at the end of the studio. We could hear nothing except Pophonoc's soft monologue, growing softer and more broken, and terminated by the sudden thud of the knife against the stone, and a frenzied flapping of wings.

Silence and darkness! I could barely see the outlines of Adachi on my



right and Garth on my left. I could not see Maitland at all. No sound came from the stone altar. Yes, there was a sound, horrible in the darkness: a steady, slow, dripping sound . . . I wanted to press the button again, but I had not the moral courage to confess my fears. I was awaiting Garth's or Maitland's order.

And then, as I sat there, a new and noxious odor began to penetrate the room. It was something vile, something compounded of the stench of a rain-drenched swamp and noisome bodies. A hot breath seemed to emanate from in front of me. Imagination painted pictures in the darkness. I seemed to see a dim form elongating in front of me. I heard a sound now, a steady, rhythmic breathing, coming from the bowl. And suddenly Garth's voice rang out sharply.

"The light, Kent! The light! The light!"

I heard him leave his chair. He bounded forward, and I heard the sound of two bodies struggling. I grasped the handle of the cord and pressed the button convulsively.

In front of the altar Garth was struggling with Maitland. Maitland's eyes were closed, and he seemed asleep; the struggles of his body seemed

purely automatic ones. But in his hand he held the sacrificial knife, and Garth's fingers were locked around his wrist.

Kneeling before the altar was the Indian. His eyes were closed, but there was a smile of happiness upon his face, and his bare chest was strained upward in a strange fashion. The fowl had disappeared from the bowl, which was clean of blood.

Suddenly Maitland ceased struggling. He opened his eyes and looked about him in a bewildered fashion, and at the same time Garth whipped the knife out of his hand and hid it in his clothes. He led Maitland back to his chair, where he sat, still dazed, and apparently unaware of what had happened.

The Indian glided silently from before the altar and disappeared.

Suddenly Adachi uttered a low cry and pointed to the stone. I looked, and my heart beat heavily in dread. Was it imagination, or was the body of the second python now distended like that of the first?

The events of that evening had upset us all. Maitland disclaimed any recollection of what had happened at the seance; he insisted that it had been uneventful, that he had been wide awake, and that no fowl had been brought into the room. In the face of that attitude, there was nothing for us to do but take our departure.

Two days later I received a curt letter from him, in which he informed me that he was returning to Guatemala by the next boat. He expressed the hope that we should meet again, but the phrasing of the letter left me with the feeling that he had taken offense at having betrayed his weakness, and that he did not wish to see me again.

A month went by. Then, unexpectedly, I received a letter from Garth. He had known of my work at the Delancey Institute of Applied Sciences, presumably, for it was there the letter was addressed. He merely asked if I could find it convenient to meet him in his apartment in the West Nineties on the following evening at eight, but the postscript added, "If you can possibly manage to come, do so without fail."

I was not greatly surprised to find Adachi with him in Garth's apartment. There was anxiety on the two men's faces, and it was evident that they had been engaged in earnest discussion.

Garth sprang to his feet as the man-servant showed me in, and grasped my hand warmly. "Have you had any word from Maitland?" were his first words.

I told him of the letter I had received, and of the conclusion I had drawn from it that Maitland was offended with me.

"He wrote each of us a similar letter," answered Garth. "But, he has

not sailed for Guatemala. He has not left his house, except once or twice, by night, since that evening. Adachi and I, who believe more or less alike upon a certain subject, have been very anxious about him. Certain developments tonight make it essential in our opinion that your cooperation should be asked.

"I'll do anything I can for Maitland," I responded.

"Good," said Garth. "Please sit down."

"I hardly know where to begin," he said, after an embarrassed pause. "I may as well say, however, that, next to Maitland, Adachi is probably the greatest living expert on the Mayan hieroglyphics, which, as you doubtless know, have been deciphered only in a very limited way. It was in the hope of cooperating with Maitland that he came here from Japan."

He broke off. "If only Maitland had been willing to continue working with me!" he said. "I can tell you one thing, Kent; it was not shame that led him to break off the association. It was conviction."

Adachi nodded. "He had become convinced that night that certain things are true," he said, "things which we of the Shinto cult have always known to be true. Mr. Kent, surely you, as a follower of the scientific method, will admit that it is possible there may exist a world of intelligences—I won't say superior to, but different from our own?"

"You mean a world of spirits?" I asked.

"Let us call them rather entities of a physical order different from that which makes up the animal kingdom," he replied.

"I am prepared to grant the possibility," I said.

"We Japanese have always known this," he answered solemnly. "And so has every race that ever lived."

"What are you suggesting, Mr. Adachi?" I asked him.

"That the Mayan gods, like the Greek and Roman gods, like the fetish of the Negro and the idol of the Hindu have lived as truly as you and I are alive," said the Japanese. "That these gods are entities which are given existence by the combined belief of thousands of their votaries. When that belief fails, they die, or live in a state of suspended animation until called back to life by a recrudescence of belief."

"The Mayan god of lightning and earthquakes, and of the pythou, whose name we do not even know, represented the ideas of generations of men, and had been fed by a hundred thousand bloody sacrifices."

Preposterous as his words sounded, I could not but be impressed by the solemnity with which he spoke them. Garth, too, was watching me anxiously.

"Please go on," I said.

"I must tell you, Mr. Kent, that I was able to read some part of the hieroglyphics around the base of the stone block that night," said the Japanese. "I do not know whether Maitland was intentionally deceiving us in saying that the Indian, Pophonoc, was the hereditary priest of the god, or whether he was mistaken. But that was untrue. Have you read Fraser's *Golden Bough*, or are you familiar with the lines in Macaulay's 'Lays':

The priest who slew the slayer,
And must himself be slain?"

"I'm afraid not," I answered. "I haven't read a line of poetry since my schooldays, and I've forgotten most all that I have read. What is the reference?"

"There is a primitive folk custom, widespread throughout the world," answered Adachi, "and evidently common among the Mayans. It symbolizes the birth and death of the corn spirit. According to this, the altar of a certain god is tended by the priest who has succeeded in overpowering and slaying the former priest. He holds his functions until, grown old and weak, he is successfully attacked and killed by his would-be successor.

"I have not the slightest doubt but that that young bronze Hercules Pophonoc, overthrew and slew the last priest of the python god, and that the worship has been going on since the time of the Mayan empire.

"When he was surprised by Maitland in his jungles, in his awe of the white man he expected death at any moment. He believed that Maitland had come to slay him, and to become priest in his place. Gradually he began to understand that Maitland knew nothing of his god.

"Yet even on the night of the seance Pophonoc was convinced that Maitland meant to kill him. You saw him bare his breast to the sacrificial knife which Maitland, also entranced, held in his hand? I got on the job just in time to save him. Now—I do not know. But I do know that both the white man and the red are merely puppets animated by the souls of innumerable dead priests, and that gigantic evil forces are struggling through them both."

I looked at the two men. I could hardly believe that I had heard them aright. Common sense reasserted itself. "It seems a big fuss about a mere idol of stone," I heard myself saying cynically.

"You should understand, Mr. Kent," said Garth, "that an idol is

something more than wood or stone. Under certain conditions an idol is able to prove that fact in a very convincing way. I have no doubt Maitland is thoroughly convinced by now. And I think that he and Pophonoc have between them succeeded in arousing a devil that is able to bring unparalleled evil upon this city of ours."

"How?" I asked.

"By imbuing the minds of a hundred gangsters with a mania for murder. By setting loose the devilish desires that sleep chained in the hearts of a surprising number of us. And tonight we must save Maitland from that devil—or, if you prefer it, from himself." He looked at Adachi.

"I must say," said the Japanese in his soft voice, "the god is most powerful at certain phases of the moon. That night was the new moon; tonight when the new moon enters Aquarius is a time especially propitious. That is in a little less than three hours' time. You see," he added with a wry smile, "it is necessary for us to act at once."

Garth glanced at Adachi, and I saw his unspoken question, "Shall we tell him?"

He glanced at me and read my answer. He drew some newspaper clippings from his pocket and handed them to me.

All of them had reference to the same subject, of which I had read in the newspapers, and the latest, from a newspaper of the day before, read in part as follows:

ANOTHER BRONXVILLE CHILD DISAPPEARS

"Consternation exists among the Negro population on the southern fringe of Bronxville at the disappearance of little Lily MacKenzie, aged four, the third colored child to vanish during the past ten days. Little Lily was sent to the corner grocery at Hudson and Pequod Streets just when it was growing dark last night. She never reached it, and nothing has since been seen of her. This third disappearance lends color to the general belief that a maniac kidnapper is at large. Police reinforcements have been drafted into the district, and no efforts are being spared to clear up the mystery. Meanwhile the colored population remains in a state of terror."

I handed the clippings back. "You mean—you think—" I stammered, feeling a chill of terror run through my body.

"Kent, I don't want to think!" cried Garth vehemently. "All I ask is that you will accompany us tonight."

"I'll go," I answered eagerly.

Garth's car was parked around the corner of the block, and we got in. He drove slowly—there was ample time—crossed the Park, and proceeded north through Harlem. We had gone some distance before I discovered what he and Adachi had with them on the floor beneath the projecting front seat.

There were two ordinary steel hatchets, but what their purpose was I had no idea, and, in default of volunteered information, I preferred not to question them. We were on the outskirts of Bronxville when Garth turned to me and said: "Just one point, Kent. It is essential that you show no surprise and retain complete silence."

"You can rely on me," I answered.

"We need you more as a witness than as a participant. You will sit between us two, and I can reasonably guarantee that you will come to no harm."

I thought it expedient to smile, and, in fact, I was already experiencing a reaction from the fears with which I had read the newspaper clippings. The idea of Maitland, whom I had known all my life, of Maitland, the eminently sane, practical man of affairs, becoming the crazed votary of a hideous, long forgotten Mayan god was too ridiculous.

With that faculty of mind-reading that I had noticed in him before, Garth glanced back at me sharply, but he said nothing. We were threading the streets of Bronxville, and I noticed an unusual number of policemen at the street corners. Here, at least, was concrete evidence that a killer or kidnaper was at large. But Maitland! I forced a smile to my lips, and again Garth looked at me.

We parked the car in front of a row of stores which were brightly illuminated, and filled with purchasers. Here was no evidence of panic. No, what Garth and Adachi suggested was altogether incredible. I was half-ashamed that I had come with them on such a mission.

A policeman scrutinized us as we left the car. There was another at the corner of the side-street up which we had turned.

It was only two or three blocks to Maitland's house. But in that short distance the whole atmosphere of the town changed. We had passed from the crude new highway to a region that had once been historic, and, though the great old houses had mostly been cut up into tenements, it still retained a certain air of dignity and aloofness. Maitland's house stood alone in a strip of lawn, with a rusting cypress tree on either side extending its branches above a decaying picket-fence. The new moon hung, a thin thread, in the sky.

Garth looked at his watch. "We're in plenty of time," he said.

"What are we going to do if Maitland's here?" I asked. "Take him away by force?"

"No," answered Garth. "This thing has gone too far. The devil that has been unchained must be destroyed before it destroys us all."

We pushed open the gate and entered. Garth tugged at the old-fashioned bell-pull, and I could hear it jangling and echoing through the house. I listened for footsteps within, but none came. I was convinced Maitland was not in the house. Garth's whole story was the product of a disordered mind.

Quietly Garth took a small steel implement from his pocket and began picking at the lock. Almost immediately footsteps sounded within; but they were the footsteps of a man standing still and raising and dropping either foot alternately, to give the impression of movement. Garth stopped his operations; the lock clicked back, the door opened, and Maitland stood before us. I knew for a certainty that he had been crouching behind the door, listening.

He was in evening dress, as before, and he seemed to have dressed himself rather carefully, for there were black pearl studs in the front of his stiff shirt, and he even had a gardenia in his button-hole. He looked at us in well feigned surprise.

"Why, gentlemen, I'm delighted to see you all here," he said affably. "If only you had called up to let me know I might expect you—but, you see, I'm just starting out for the evening."

Garth's response amazed me. He stepped up to Maitland and tapped him lightly on the cheek, at the same time making a pass with his hand fore his eyes.

For a moment Maitland stood just as he had been standing. Then his jaw fell, he shivered, he looked at us dully, as if he didn't know who we were. He breathed deeply. Then he recognized me.

"Kent?" he mumbled. "What brings you here? Oh, yes, I remember now. I wrote to you to come and see the trophies from my last trip. And these gentlemen must be Mr. Adachi and Mr. Garth, who were to have accompanied you. I—I've been asleep, I think. I'm not feeling very well this evening, but come upstairs and see my museum, gentlemen. I brought back some curious stuff—a sacrificial block and—"

"Meest' Maitland!"

The Indian had glided forward out of the shadows of the hall, moving so softly that he might have been one of the stone serpents come to life. But there was nothing serpentine about Pophonoc. He looked in the pink

of condition, a strong, vigorous, healthy youth. Only his eyes glowed with baleful fires as he turned them on Garth and myself for a moment.

"Meest' Maitland!"

There followed a phrase in Mayan, an movement of the hand, and a look of piteous uncertainty came upon Maitland's face.

"I don't want—I don't want—" he stammered. "Help me, Kent!" The words burst from his lips with almost a wail. And then the half-dazed look was gone, and Maitland was once again the suave, polished individual who had just met us at the door.

"Just starting out for the evening, gentlemen," he repeated. "But you must come upstairs," he added, as the Indian spoke again in a soft whisper. "It is so seldom I see you, that I feel inclined to sacrifice my appointment and ask you to look at some of my trophies."

I saw the look of triumph in Pophonoc's eyes. He was staring insolently into Garth's face. "Who is the greater, you or I?" he seemed to be asking silently.

As if taking up the challenge, Garth bowed and smiled. "I'm sure we'll all be delighted to accept your invitation, Mr. Maitland," he answered.

He pushed past Pophonoc, and Adachi and I followed him. I had a pretty clear idea of what had been happening in the hall, though it had staggered me for a moment. Maitland had suffered an alternation of personality, and between the two beings alternately manifesting in him, there was no point of memory contact. I had heard of several such cases, and there was nothing uncanny about it, except that the submerged Maitland, now dominant, appeared to have been evoked by a single word from the Indian's lips.

"Kent," Garth managed to whisper to me, as I followed him up the stairs, "I guaranteed tonight that you would not be exposed to danger. I must withdraw that guarantee. Pophonoc understands that the battle is set, and that there can be no withdrawing. To attempt to leave this house would be the signal for a murderous attack on us. He knows, and so does Maitland, that they are booked for the chair, or for an insane institution. We must go through with our task."

"We're three to two," I answered. "Do you mean to say, if we wanted to escape, which I certainly don't, we couldn't overpower Maitland and Pophonoc?"

My anger rose. I resented the suggestion that we were trapped, three to two by a savage and a man who was unbalanced. I was incensed at Garth's suggestion that we were in danger.

"Kent, you don't understand the situation," Garth whispered back.

"It is for Maitland's sake. I want to save the man who appealed to us for help just now, the Maitland whom we three have known. To save him in spite of the man created by that Indian and his devilish rites—the madman, the childslayer, the—"

I could not hear the rest, and I did not want to hear. I had seen enough to realize that the Indian youth was Maitland's malignant master. It was not necessary to put Garth's interpretation upon the situation to realize that we were in danger, and Maitland most of all. But I was quite at a loss as to what Garth meant to do, though Adachi seemed to know.

We entered the museum, and Pophonoc switched on the lights. Maitland was in the same affable mood as when we entered the house, and yet I had the feeling that, in this alternating personality of his, he did not know us, was feeling his way, and above all, responding to the unspoken commands of Pophonoc.

"Meest' Maitland think you want seance, hearum god talk," said Pophonoc insolently. "He wait for you tonight hope for all sit together, maybe god tell him where mooch gold hided, yes?"

"That's what we came for," answered Garth, looking at his watch. "Tell him, Maitland, that the moon enters Aquarius in a few minutes now. In his own language, of course, there isn't any Aquarius. But you'll be able to make it clear to him."

"Ah, you are suggesting astrological influences, Garth?" smiled Maitland. He spoke to Pophonoc, who looked Garth full in the face. For the first time the Indian's easy insolence was not in evidence. Maitland had revealed to him that Garth was not the simpleton he had supposed. Yes, Pophonoc looked uneasy. He was afraid of the white man's knowledge, and he did not know how far Garth's went.

He scowled as he led the way toward the altar and drew up the four chairs again. This time it was the Indian who controlled the switch. At a touch from his hand, every light in the museum went out, except a tiny red one that hung high above the idol.

For a minute or two I could see nothing. Then, as my eyes grew accommodated to the darkness, a cry hung on my lips, and I compressed them forcibly to stifle it.

For both the carven pythons were hideously distended. Certainly they had not appeared that way when I was there a month before. But that was not the full horror of it.

For the outlines of the shapes inside those hideous forms were those of little human beings.

My brain reeled. In that moment I was convinced; I believed, I under-

stood the foulness of this old Mayan devil that had come back to life, into our modern world, through Maitland's folly. I was going mad, I think; I felt Garth's hand touch mine, and something in that touch of his enabled me to pull myself together.

And then my fear was replaced by an elemental rage that would admit no fear. I had had a glimpse into the very depths of human wickedness, and I swore to myself, as a Crusader might have sworn, that this abominable thing should never come back to life to stay alive and trouble the kindlier Earth of today.

I felt Garth's hand touch mine again, approvingly, as if he had read my mind. I bent forward and saw the stern aspect of Adachi's features. He, too, was ready to battle against the abomination.

Maitland had settled himself in his chair. His head drooped on his breast. Pophonoc had flung himself upon his knees again, and his soft, rhythmical invocation of the god filled the place with cadenced music.

So 'dim was the little light that I could see only the vague outlines of the Indian's form. But gradually Maitland's heavy, stertorous breathing began to rise above the words. It was hard to sit there, not knowing what was going to take place—to feel that sense of infinite evil that brooded over the altar, and not to know what to do.

Yet I had complete faith in Garth. I felt him press my hand once more. I felt the rigidity of his arm. The nervous tension in the place was growing almost unbearable. And Pophonoc's droning chant went on and on.

It changed. The Indian had risen to his feet. Facing the idol, he poured forth what sounded like an impassioned oration.

It ceased. He sank to his knees again. Maitland's breathing had grown frightful. The breath whistled through his lungs in hoarse, whining spasm. The light above the altar seemed to be growing dimmer.

I was falling asleep. There was no longer any sensation in my limbs. My eyelids seemed borne down by leaden weights. I could not stir. I felt Garth's hand gripping my wrist, heard him whispering in my ear, "Keep awake, Kent! Keep awake as you value your life and your immortal soul!"

With all my power of will I sought to obey him. Desperately I fought back that somnolence that was overpowering me. I managed to keep my eyelids apart, to focus all that was left of me in the faculty of sight. But that was all that I could do. I was cataleptic, helpless, and barely conscious of my surroundings. Only the sense of mortal peril helped me in that fight.

And now once more I was conscious of that vile, sickening, sweetish, earthy smell in my nostrils. Hot, fetid blasts were blowing toward me from the idol. And then something happened that shocked me into an alertness that helped me in my battle. Was it imagination, or was something stirring on either side of that carven, leering face?

It was not imagination. Little ripples seemed to be running up and down the stone. The stone was moving, undulating. *The carved pythons were alive!*

I would have cried out in horror, but no sound issued from my lips. The bodies were moving, tremors were passing up and down the carven colls. And the vile serpent faces were moving, too. Imagination? No, incredible truth! They were turning upon the coils of heaving flesh, distended to bursting point by their abominable meal. They were turning toward me.

And something else was happening. The stone block was growing longer. It was elongating toward the ceiling, and the face of the leering god was no longer carved on the stone, but raised above it!

The impulse to sleep had passed, but the catalepsy remained. I could not stir. I saw the serpent coils stretching toward me, loop after loop

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of quivering flesh. I felt the hot, noisesome breath upon my face. It couldn't go on, or I should become a demented, raving, mindless thing. My brain was bursting.

And over the altar towered a hideous being, shadowy and vague, yet growing momentarily more clear. Its face was the leering face of the carven god, but infinitely more cruel and hideous, more murderous and obscene.

The end came. The place was filled with tumult, with leaping bodies. I heard a scream of terrible intensity break from Maitland's lips, saw him leap forward to where Pophonoc crouched beside the bowl. Simultaneously I saw Garth and Adachi leap from their seats on either side of me.

In their hands they held the hatchets that they had brought with them, and I saw them hacking at the coils that were entangling them, struggling like Laocoon and his sons in the famous sculpture.

I felt one of the coils pass over my head and tighten about my neck. Stone? No, this was flesh and blood, cold, clammy, infinitely strong. And with the horror of it the catalepsy passed. I was on my feet, screaming with horror, and fighting madly to free myself.

I saw Adachi's ax descend. He had lopped off the coil a foot from my body, and the writhing segment dropped to the floor, leaving me free. I stumbled forward with the idea of rendering aid to Garth, who was still struggling in the coils of the second serpent. But a more fearful scream issued from Maitland's lips. And the sight I saw was more dreadful than what I had seen hitherto.

By some demoniac light which, I swear, never emanated from the little red bulb, I saw him standing over the body of Pophonoc. In one hand raised aloft, was the sacrificial knife of stone, and in the other Pophonoc's heart, torn from the living flesh in the manner of the old Mayan priests.

A blinding flash of lightning followed, and then a peal of thunder that seemed to shake the room. It shook me from my feet. Next moment I was struggling amid the debris that was raining down on me. The whole building seemed to be collapsing. A beam dropped from above, pinning me to the floor, which was collapsing too. I felt myself falling into an abyss. I knew no more.

It was in a private room in a hospital that I came back to consciousness hours later. One of my legs, as I discovered afterward, had

been broken, as well as two of my ribs, and there was hardly a sound spot on my body. Garth was seated beside me, and, as I recognized him, the whole horrid scene came back to me.

Garth leaned over me. "Kent, do you remember?" he whispered.

I nodded feebly. I heard his voice in my ear, "Say nothing, and ask no questions. You're doing finely now. In a day or two I'll tell you everything."

It was the nurse who told me that the house in which Maitland was entertaining us had collapsed, owing to some subterranean explosion, burying us in its ruins. Maitland had been drawn out crushed almost beyond recognition, she admitted, and an Indian servant whom he had brought back with him had perished likewise.

"You might have thought they had been pulverized in some mighty engine," was the way a doctor put it later.

Some local fault in the subsoil, an explosion of natural gas, the seeping in of water to the foundations—such were various theories advanced by the press. Nearly the entire building had been submerged, and Maitland's trophies had been buried beneath a pile of wreckage that was merely leveled off and never disturbed.

Through all this information I kept my mouth shut tight, as Garth had instructed me. But I knew already—I knew because I believed—that it was the fury of the baffled earthquake demon that had wrought the destruction.

It was not until I was able to be conveyed, by special arrangement, to Garth's apartment, for convalescence, that he and Adachi explained to me the part that they had played that fearful night.

"You must try to visualize Maitland," Garth began. "He had had certain experiences in the jungles, as he told us, which had shaken him from his firm materialistic viewpoint. Also he had profaned the sanctuary of the jungle god. So long as he held firm to his contemptuous disbelief, he was unassailable, for there is no power on earth or under it can shake the human will.

"It was when he began to doubt that he laid himself open to the insidious workings of a diabolical power which was struggling back to existence after a sleep of more than a thousand years, aided by the spells of Pophonoc.

"It was the sacrifice of the fowl that first gave the demon strength to manifest itself. It was the later sacrifices—we won't dwell upon those—but, as Homer says, it is through blood that the dead obtain the power

to assume visible form. I have no doubt but that Maitland was possessed by some dead priest, who came to control him gradually.

"Finally came the long contest between Pophonoc and the dead priest for the supreme control. One had to kill the other, in order to serve the god. It may be that the Indian let himself be killed, as a supreme sacrifice. . . .

When we went there that night, both Pophonoc and Maitland resolved upon our death. Adachi and I had foreseen that. We took with us those hatchets. Steel, or iron, rather, as you probably know, was considered a supernatural weapon in the age of stone. Its presence was held to nullify all the power of the presiding demon.

"It was the presence of the steel hatchets, rather than their cutting power, that saved us. I doubt whether the sharpest flint would have sufficed to cut the coils of those serpents, materialized from the stone by the art of Pophonoc."

He ceased, then looked at me quizzically. "You are something of a skeptic still, Kent?" he asked.

"I've seen enough to teach me that credulity is sometimes wiser than the wisdom of the scoffer," I replied. "But—Maitland? He was my friend. . . ."

"I think," put in Adachi, "that though Maitland will have grievous trials to bear for his lack of wisdom, that wasn't Maitland. Only his body—"

"No," said Garth, "that wasn't Maitland."



The Writings Of *Elwin Adams*

by Larry Eugene Meredith

(author of *The Last Letter From Norman Underwood*)

Writing stories in our medium amounts, in part, to playing a game with the experienced reader in that the writer may satisfy and delight the reader now by doing the expected, now by doing the unexpected, and now by combining the two in a way which will keep the reader interested and guessing to the end. We shall be interested in seeing if you agree that LARRY EUGENE MEREDITH has done well in his combination of elements.

I HAD PASSED THROUGH THIS SAME REGION twenty-two years ago while on my honeymoon. Those had been giddy days and we had hardly glanced at this countryside in our hurry to reach gayer spots. My wife had died a few years ago with one of those wasting diseases which leaves little more than a shallow shell of its victim. It had been a comfort when she finally died; she had suffered with the pain for so long. Since the funeral, I had buried myself in my work at the university, completing research in my field. Now driving over this once happy route, I returned to the sadness that I thought I had pressed completely out of my mind.

It was simple coincidence which brought me back to this New England country. About a month ago, as I have said, I finished the research project that had occupied much of my life. I am a bibliographer—that is I study books. For a while, I was floundering about, trying to find a new and interesting subject for study, when I was contacted by a publishing company. It seemed that the firm was interested in bringing out a special set of books featuring the stories of a dozen great writers of fantasy and horror. They wanted to have a very complete selection, plus introductions on each author, and they had come to me, hoping that I would do background research for them; that is, compile complete lists of these authors' works and gather facts about their lives. It sounded interesting and diverting, and I accepted.

I had much to learn, since I had spent a lifetime searching out data on more stuffy subjects, and was vague about the fantasy field. Before actually beginning on the list supplied by the firm, I did some private background study. This was simply reading a wide and varied collection of horror tales.

I began with a modern, Yar Grenue, who had caught a vast following with the adventures of an impish ghost named Impia. But I soon realized that Grenue was unique. He wrote in an intellectually slick style stories which were really satires of horror stories. Some quick checking in literary circles revealed that Grenue had very little appeal with the true connoisseur of the fantasy story. This was something I found present in the style of most modern writers. They were inconsistent with the basic rules of fantasy, writing instead small essays of allegory commenting on modern society and its lacks. This was all well and good, but had little to do with the project ahead of me. It was obvious that I should turn back to the old masters of the macabre: Poe, Algernon Blackwood, Ambrose Bierce, etc., some of whom were on the firm's list.

Once prepared through reading, I felt ready to begin my research. I debated where to begin. I was thinking of starting in alphabetical order, but in my reading I had found one author to be more frightening than any other. I was so impressed by his ability to scare, to present his stories in such a realistic style, that I chose to begin with him. I began by browsing through the university library and I got my first lead out of a thin volume of stories gathering dust on a back shelf. The book was an anthology and it contained two stories by the author I was interested in. This volume was important for it led me to the bridge over my first difficulty. The author that the firm and I were after was unknown; he had signed his stories only with the initials: E.A. Not that it was any

different in this case; the editor of the book had not used any more than those initials in his introduction, but he had mentioned that he had known E.A., and owned the copyrights on the stories. The title of the book was *Post-Mortem* and its editor was Paul Taggart.

It took a while, but I finally found somebody who had heard of Paul Taggart. Through this person I was able to discover that Taggart was still alive, and week later I located his address, a rural address in the bleak, stark backwoods of New England. I wrote to Taggart and when he realized my earnest interest in E.A., he invited me to visit him, for he claimed it would have been what Elwin would have wanted. I had my first jigsaw piece. E.A. was Elwin something. I left immediately.

Taggart's house was a rustic home, very plain and cold. You could easily imagine the tight-lipped Yankee farmer walking through its halls carrying an oil lamp and wearing a night-cap. Yet no matter how bleak the house appeared, the countryside seemed bleaker, especially since I arrived as twilight was turning to night. The trees were heavy and old and casted a shadowy shape over the country. The wind stirred through the bare November branches and the limbs stooped slowly toward you. Though they never really came any closer, you had a strange feeling that they had. I readily admit that I was very glad when the front door of the home opened to my knock and the warm glow of bright light streaked across the porch.

If I was happy to gain entrance to the house, I was taken back by Paul Taggart. He was an extremely old man. A great mass of wrinkles plowed about his face when he talked; his lips were sunken and gray with age, and his small red eyes showed he didn't sleep well. After I had been there a couple of days, I found that this was true. I often heard him tossing and turning in his bed in the room across from mine, and I often heard him get up in the night and go downstairs.

The night I arrived, we did not spend talking, for Taggart told me he preferred to get to bed early at his age and we could talk in the morning. He showed me to my room and said goodnight. I was just as glad, for I was exhausted and I fell onto the bed immediately after removing my clothes. When I awoke the sun was streaming through my windows and it brightened the room considerably.

That day we talked, except for the two hours I spent reading letters which Taggart kindly gave me permission to do. From Taggart I learned that Elwin Adams was the author's name and that he had lived a short, rather unhappy life, most of which was spent alone in this very house. Hodgkin's disease struck him down early and his remaining stories

and sketches became the responsibility of his friend Taggart, who continued to have them published. Taggart was very helpful and I was learning about Adams even faster than I had hoped. He had also made all of Adams' letters, notes and stories available and so by the end of a week my work list was complete.

On the last night of my planned visit, I was awakened abruptly by a crash from downstairs in the library. I hurried down to the room and discovered Taggart lying face down on the floor, clutching something in his hand. Across the room was an upset chair and some books were scattered around the floor. Taggart was breathing heavily and gasping for breath as I bent near him. I attempted to help him up, but he shook his head. Instead he handed me the object he was clutching. It seemed nothing more than a common gold locket, if a bit larger than would be commonly found in such a piece. It dangled from a gold chain.

Paul Taggart could hardly speak and there was an expression of utmost terror on his face. Nervously he kept glancing toward the overturned chair as if expecting to see somebody right it and sit down. He spoke to me in a drifting, far-away voice.

"Take it . . . the locket," he said. "Destroy it . . . at once. At once."

His eyes moved up beneath the thin purple lids and he died. He was an old man and I supposed he had suffered some sort of heart attack. At any rate, I contributed his last words to delirium and stuffed the locket into my pajama pocket. I took a final look at Taggart. He no longer looked fear-struck; there were distinct signs of long awaited relief on his wizened face.

I notified an undertaker in the nearest town and made arrangements to remove Taggart for burial. Meanwhile I knew I would have to stay around the area until the officialities were taken care of concerning the death. I took the opportunity to examine the Adams library at my leisure.

The library had a well-stocked selection of books. There was a section devoted entirely to the works of the other great terror writers. Many of the books were rare volumes and I found much needed material there. There were other books in the library beside horror: great classics and many books on astronomy and archeology. And of course, every book that Adams and Taggart had ever published. Unfortunately there was no diary, which I had hoped to find.

The morning after Taggart's death was a beautifully clear day. The rich sunlight gave a liveliness even to that bleak country. It was such a lovely day that I chose to drive down to an old preserved New England village not too many miles away from the Adams house. I had not

visited the museum village for long when I realized that it had been a mistake in coming. Seeing the old town that I had first seen with my wife brought back the pain and loneliness of her loss. I felt more dismal by the hour until I couldn't bear it any longer and started driving back to the house.

It was getting close to evening as I turned into the long lane taking me off the country road and back into the marshy fields that surrounded the property. The beautiful day had turned ashen by afternoon and now large drops of rain began to splash on my windshield, spreading out in spider-web designs before running down the glass and forming puddles at the bottom. It was falling slowly, trying to break forth with violence. When I got out of the car, I could feel the powerful wind which had arisen and twisted the naked trees in painful contortions.

The house was dark, even after I turned on the lights. Each corner of the rooms was a dark hole. The furniture cast shadows on the walls. It became obvious that the location of the lamps was poor, probably purposely, since I had learned that Adams preferred to write in dim light. It was surprising that Taggart had not rearranged things to more comfortable positions after Adams' death. Since he hadn't I would; I spent an hour getting the lamps set in the best places to warm the rooms with cheery modern light.

For the next three hours after my rearranging, I wrote. I began by re-copying my notes and was planning to spend the evening plotting my presentation of the introduction to E. A.; instead I ended up writing a short story. I had never tried my hand at fiction before, but something about the house seemed to stimulate my imagination and I typed out a short story without too much effort. Most surprisingly, the story actually sounded good on re-reading and appeared very finished for a first draft. Usually I have to rewrite everything I do several times, even letters, before they seem readable. I was beginning to think I had uncovered some long hidden talent within myself. It made me feel quite satisfied as well as physically exhausted and drained.

I went to bed and fell asleep at once. I had the strangest dream. I was running through a dark misty place. The ground was mossy. My left arm was stiffly outstretched and dangling from my hand, swinging back and forth at the end of its golden chain, was the locket that Paul Taggart had given me the night he died. I had forgotten it completely, but it must have been on my unconscious mind, for it was dominating me throughout the dream. As I ran, I stared at its gentle sway. It was actually leading me through the mist. I followed it into a long room with

large square cases stacked along the wall. I was running through a burial vault. After running past the coffins for a long time, I stopped at one and held the locket over the lid. Slowly the lid opened and a thin hand reached for the locket. A face appeared. It was Taggart, white with death, and he snatched the locket from me and placed it about his neck. He whispered something which I couldn't understand. Before I could ask him to speak louder, the vault shook and filled with angry dashing spots of light. A thunderous tearing broke the air.

The terrible sound woke me. I sat up, sweating and the blanket wrapped around me was soaked. I listened, thinking that there must have been some real noise that had wakened me, but the only sound I heard was my own heart beating with my fear. I lay back, but I didn't think I could go back to sleep. I was wide-awake. Finally I swung my legs over the edge of the bed and sat there in the dark. For some reason, restlessness, I suppose, I picked my robe from off a nearby chair and went from my room and downstairs. As I walked through the lower rooms toward the kitchen, which I had convinced myself was my target, a midnight raid on the icebox, I accidentally pulled the nearly forgotten locket from my pocket. Much to my amazement, the gold metal glowed brightly in the dark. It had a distinct halo of light beaming around it. It also appeared that the light came from the inside of the locket and was shining out the crack.

I snapped it open. The light nearly blinded me. It burned with great heat. I dropped the locket and fell back against the hall wall with my arms over my face. As I stood there, covering my eyes, I heard a voice. It was not a singular sound that could be easily located, but an echoing so that the voice was constantly repeating through the house. It was a feminine voice.

My heart beat faster and faster. It threatened to tear loose and fall in my chest. I felt mortal terror for the first time in my life. Even so, I lowered my arms and squinted into the bright blue light.

She stood before me in a white flowing gown made of air and cloud, flowers trimming its hem and her hair. My wife. My lovely dead wife. Her brown hair was captured by a draft, it floated upward until it was a dark curtain blowing back upon her head. Her hand, delicate as tissue, blue and white, and cold as plastic, reached out and touched my cheek. Her eyes came to mine, but you could not look into them. They were not alive with human life, but with a smokey fire that would not allow you to focus upon it.

"No! No!" I cried, and shrank back along the wall. I knew I wasn't

still asleep; I was awake, never more awake. Yet, I saw my wife as if she was real and in the room, and as I edged away the blue light grew brighter and it swallowed the glimmering image of my wife, and she was gone.

My heart stopped its furious beat. Now I felt a terrible loss. "Come back," I shouted and moved into the warmth of the light, "come back!" The terrible blue light shot out of the locket in a widening fan, whirling around in clouds of rainbow. The circling ceased and standing before me was the image of Taggart. His eyes were fiery red and popped wide open; his mouth was pulled back in a vicious grimace. It was the same look he had had before dying, the look of unutterable fear. His lean arm was raised, the skin hanging, gray, like peeling paint, his index finger pointing, quivering, at me. His mouth dropped open and out of the dark tunnel behind the immovable lips came a hollow sound, which vibrated through the glow, and the very words seemed to be sparks that burned as they reached me.

"I warned you," it said. "Why didn't you destroy it?"

Suddenly the house was filled with laughter. Laughter filled with something evil, like a man laughing at cruelty. Taggart dropped his rigid arm and stiffly turned his head to gaze back over his shoulder, as if something truly horrible was coming. His face grew more awful. It became so animated by fear that it was hard to recognize the man at all. Then his head fell back, his eyes closed to the world, the mouth swooped open and he screamed the most unhumanly scream I have ever heard. The light rose and consumed the image, and Taggart was gone.

Again the light vibrated and this time from its center stepped a stranger to confront me. He was a tall, thin man wearing rimless glasses. He was sickly pale. His face was haggard and tortured. His head nodded from side to side, as if he was trying to deny some established fact. There was a faint familiarity about him. It was a long time in coming to me, but it came and I knew I was looking at an image of Elwin Adams.

"You will know," he said; again the voice was hollow, bouncing. "You will know."

The light blazed and surrounded Adams, and he too vanished. Now the light grew dimmer and dimmer until the room returned to total darkness again. The laughing and other sounds that had been present stopped and the house became silent.

The silence depressed me. It seemed unnatural and I began to plead

for it to stop. I wanted to hear some sound again. It was such a deep thorough silence that I thought I had gone deaf.

It lasted but a moment and my mind cleared. I was alone in the hallway, the gold locket lying at my feet, closed. I stooped and picked it up. Outside the windows I could see the sky getting lighter. It was almost dawn and I felt as if I had just awakened from a deep sleep. I looked around me in a daze, wondering what I was doing downstairs. I had never walked in my sleep before, but it seemed I must have that night. I began to recall the dreams; they were as clear as if I had actually experienced the awful illusions. I was also very weak and tired. I replaced the locket in my pajamas and went back to the bedroom and bed. When I awoke again, it was noon.

As soon as my eyes opened, I got an idea for another short story. It drove me from the bed. I could hardly wait to put it on paper. The need to finish this story was so great that I didn't stop to get anything to eat. I went directly to work and I worked the rest of the day, far into the evening, never once having to pause to think of the right word or the next event. It almost wrote itself. And I didn't feel my lack of nourishment until I had finished the twenty-seventh and last page. Once completed, I was overcome with a nagging hunger.

Even then I didn't arise from my chair and head for the kitchen. Instead I picked up the story and read it. It was a horror story—so horrible, in fact, that I was amazed at my own imagination. The things that haunted the characters I had written about were fantastic, like nothing of Earth. I also noticed that the style wasn't my own. It was very definitely the style of Elwin Adams. It was very clear that being in this house and among this man's life work was influencing my own writing, but nonetheless, I felt grateful that the story was so good. I was certain it was one of the best things I had ever written, even if it was a fantasy story and far removed from my usual work.

At last I gave in to the pangs in my stomach and left the library and went into the hall. I shoved my hands into my pockets, as was my habit when tired, and discovered an object in my right pocket. I pulled it out and there was the gold locket. I hadn't remembered putting it in my trousers pocket, but there it was shedding its strange light into the dim hall. This time I cautiously opened the locket but a crack. Even this sent a blinding flash of light at me, the same twirling blue light I had seen the night before, the light I had convinced myself had been a dream.

The heat became intense. The locket was getting hot. I couldn't hold

it without burning my hand. It became too hot and I dropped it and it came open.

My God, my God, what I saw in that blue light. What vast horrors I released into that hallway. Those things, those very things, that I knew Adams had written about. The self-same haunters that appeared in my own newly-written story. They walked out of the gleaming light into my sight. Forbidden creatures and gods of some region of time and space that exists outside our modern life. And with them came their strange slaves. People stooped and bent, with stringy golden hair and yellow eyes, glowing and twinkling in their sockets like polished metal, their noses broad and beaked, their cheeks slit with raw wounds, their mouths square and wide and toothless.

The light danced before me. The rumbling noise that had begun to fill my mind grew to an explosion. My eyes closed, my head dropped into my waiting hands and I slid down the wall to the floor. I held my face in my palms. The house shook gently around me and as the shaking grew, I fell asleep.

When I revived I was still lying on the hall floor. The locket was lying beside me, snapped closed. Warm sunlight fell across my face. It was another day. I had passed-out and slept the night. My stomach rumbled, for I had not eaten for nearly forty-eight hours. I got to my feet and stumbled out to the kitchen. I took some food from the refrigerator and nibbled at some fruit as I prepared to cook some eggs. I cracked the shells and it came to me—a new story. I couldn't shake it off; I had to get to my typewriter and get it down while I remembered it.

All day I typed and the story poured forth. Another tale in Adams

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If you're in an area where we've suffered reverses, so that you don't see us, there is a simple remedy; you'll find it on pages 125 and 128 of this issue.

style. Fantastically alive. But it sapped my strength; I had worked the entire day, far into the night. The room dissolved into darkness as I finished.

My chest was gripped with pain, my hands ached. I could hardly move my arms and legs with the cramps that were in them. My head spun when I rose, and tiny black spots played before my eyes. My lips were dry and stuck together. I had to eat, to drink. I staggered into the dark hall, waiting for the golden locket to appear and fill the hall with the light. I deliberately kept my hands away from my pockets and kept my eyes toward the kitchen, all my concentration aimed at the refrigerator. I stumbled back and forth. My legs seemed made of rubber, but I made it. I panted heavily, leaning against the tall white box for support. My hand, shaking, unsteady, grasped the chilly metal handle of the door. I pulled back and the door swung open, but lying on the topmost shelf, already open, and brighter than the refrigerator light, was the locket.

If I could shut off its glow I would be all right. Yes, certainly. I slammed the refrigerator closed and leaned against the door. I wouldn't open it again. I knew the locket was in there. It would be safe in there. I could eat other things. I crossed to a pantry and looked in. There was bread and jams and cans of soup. I took a can and took it to the table to open. Behind me I heard a click. I turned and the refrigerator was opening. A crack had appeared; blue light edged the white door.

I had to stop it. I ran across the room. I tripped over a chair, fell to the floor, and still I moved forward, crawling toward the door. I made a dive, but I misjudged, I missed. The door was open and the blue light flooded the kitchen.

I groveled before it as the creatures began to form in the purple shadows. The heat burned my body; my face was alive with the heat. Tears forced their way from my eyes.

Through the bright light I could see the open icebox. Its contents were within my reach. I saw milk . . .

I lost my fear. My hunger drove it from me. My mind held onto the sight of the food shelves. I was forcing myself to crawl into the blue glow. Moving slowly forward, I felt nothing could stop me, not even the fire that was burning my body. I dragged my heavy body closer to my goal. I was almost there when I felt something grip me. I tried to move, but it held me back. I turned to see what had me, and I saw it. Large! Eyes made of moons. An acrid odor emanated from it, and it cast a cold shadow over the blue light.

I was running. I don't know how I got loose or where I found the strength to run, but I ran. Dashing into the night, rushing from that house and through the dreary countryside surrounding it. I ran through the trees bending over me, ran through the broken weeds in the dead winter fields. I ran all the way down to the village and there I collapsed in the center of town. I was crying and screaming and people woke up and came out and got me.

They were good to me. They allowed me to spend the night in their home and in the morning they fed me a large breakfast. They thought I should stay for a few days and catch my strength, but understandably I wanted to get as far away from that part of the country as possible. They were nice enough to go out to the house and bring my car to town for me. I left immediately and drove all the way down in one day. I gave up the project for the publishing firm and have moved out here to this farm for a rest. Only two things bother me now. One is that someday I will have to open the glove compartment in my car. It should be empty, but it rattles.



decoration by Boyce

The Colossus Of Ylourgne

by Clark Ashton Smith

(author of *The Monster of the Prophecy*, *The Door to Saturn*)

In this story, as in others of the *Averoigne* series, CLARK ASHTON SMITH shows the proper use of humor in weird and fantastic fiction. There are no slapstick scenes, no burlesques of the medium, no out-right jokes—but, as in the still wonderful-to-read tales of Boccaccio, a pawky undertone of ridicule which gooses rather than smites with the hammer. To the editor's way of thinking, this sort of satire is not only more artistic, but more effective than the heavy-handed, club-bearing and club-footed sort of operation which passes for satire too frequently. It is written somewhere that the Devil thrives on angry challenges to battle, but shrinks from hearty and unfearful laughter. You don't have to believe in Satan in order to get the point of this; for evil at all times takes itself seriously and cannot endure being shown up as simply absurd.

THE THRICE-INFAMOUS NATHAIRE, alchemist, astrologer and necromancer, with his ten devil-given pupils, had departed very suddenly and under circumstances of strict secrecy from the town of Vyones. It was widely thought, among the people of that vicinage, that

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his departure had been prompted by a salutary fear of ecclesiastical thumb-screws and fagots. Other wizards, less notorious than he, had already gone to the stake during a year of unusual inquisitory zeal; and it was well-known that Nathaire had incurred the reprobation of the Church. Few, therefore, considered the reason of his going a mystery; but the means of transit which he had employed, as well as the destination of the sorcerer and his pupils, were regarded as more than problematic.

A thousand dark and superstitious rumors were abroad; and passers made the sign of the Cross when they neared the tall, gloomy house which Nathaire had built in blasphemous proximity to the great cathedral and had filled with a furniture of Satanic luxury and strangeness. Two daring thieves, who had entered the mansion when the fact of its desertion became well established, reported that much of this furniture as well as the books and other paraphernalia of Nathaire had seemingly departed with its owner, doubtless to the same fiery bourn. This served to augment the unholy mystery: for it was patently impossible that Nathaire and his ten apprentices, with several cart-loads of household belongings, could have passed the ever-guarded city gates in any legitimate manner without the knowledge of the custodians.

It was said by the more devout and religious motety that the Arch-fiend, with a legion of bat-winged assistants, had borne them away bodily at moonless midnight. There were clerics, and also reputable burghers, who professed to have seen the flight of dark, man-like shapes upon the blotted stars together with others that were not men, and to have heard the wailing cries of the hell-bound crew as they passed in an evil cloud over the roofs and city walls.

Others believed that the sorcerers had transported themselves from Vyones through their own diabolic arts, and had withdrawn to some unfrequented fastness where Nathaire, who had long been in feeble health, could hope to die in such peace and serenity as might be enjoyed by one who stood between the flames of the *auto-da-fe* and those of Abaddon. It was thought that he had lately cast his own horoscope, for the first time in his fifty-odd years, and had read therein an impending conjunction of disastrous planets, signifying early death.

Others still, among whom were certain rival astrologers and enchanters, said that Nathaire had retired from the public view merely that he might commune without interruption with various coadjutive demons; and thus might weave, unmolested, the black spells of a supreme and lycanthropic malice. These spells, they hinted, would in due time be visited upon Vyones and perhaps upon the entire region of Averigne; and would no

doubt take the form of a fearsome pestilence, or a wholesale involution, or a realm-wide incursion of succubi and incubi.

Amid the seething of strange rumors, many half-forgotten tales were recalled, and new legends were created overnight. Much was made of the obscure nativity of Nathaire and his dubitable wanderings before he had settled, six years previous, in Vyones. People said that he was fiend-begotten, like the fabled Merlin: his father being no less a personage than Alastor, demon of revenge; and his mother a deformed and dwarfish sorceress. From the former, he had taken his spitefulness and malignity; from the latter, his squat, puny physique.

He had travelled in Orient lands, and had learned from Egyptian or Saracenic masters the unhallowed art of necromancy, in whose practice he was unrivalled. There were black whispers anent the use he had made of long-dead bodies, of fleshless bones, and the service he had wrung from buried men that the angel of doom alone could lawfully raise up. He had never been popular, though many had sought his advice and assistance in the furthering of their own more or less dubious affairs. Once, in the third year after his coming to Vyones, he had been stoned in public because of his bruited necromancies, and had been permanently lamed by a well-directed cobble. This injury, it was thought, he had never forgiven; and he was said to return the antagonism of the clergy with the hellish hatred of an Antichrist.

Apart from the sorcerous evils and abuses of which he was commonly suspected, he had long been looked upon as a corrupter of youth. Despite his minikin stature, his deformity and ugliness, he possessed a remarkable power, a mesmeric persuasion; and his pupils, whom he was said to have plunged into bottomless and ghoulish iniquities, were young men of the most brilliant promise. On the whole, his vanishment was regarded as a quite providential riddance.

Among the people of the city there was one man who took no part in the somber gossip and lurid speculation. This man was Gaspard du Nord, himself a student of the proscribed sciences, who had been numbered for a year among the pupils of Nathaire but had chosen to withdraw quietly from the master's household after learning the enormities that would attend his further initiation. He had, however, taken with him much rare and peculiar knowledge, together with a certain insight into the baleful powers and night-dark motives of the necromancer.

Because of this knowledge and insight, Gaspard preferred to remain silent when he heard of Nathaire's departure. Also, he did not think it well to revive the memory of his own past pupilage. Alone with his

books, in a sparsely furnished attic, he frowned above a small, oblong mirror, framed with an arabesque of golden vipers, that had once been the property of Nathaire.

It was not the reflection of his own comely and youthful though subtly lined face that caused him to frown. Indeed, the mirror was of another kind than that which reflects the features of the gazer. In its depths, for a few instants, he had beheld a strange and ominous-looking scene, whose participants were known to him but whose location he could not recognize or orientate. Before he could study it closely, the mirror clouded as if with the rising of alchemic fumes, and he had seen no more.

This clouding, he reflected, could mean only one thing: Nathaire had known himself watched and had put forth a counterspell that rendered the clairvoyant mirror useless. It was the realization of this fact, together with the brief, sinister glimpse of Nathaire's present activities, that troubled Gaspard and caused a chill horror to mount slowly in his mind: a horror that had not yet found a palpable form or a name.

2

THE DEPARTURE OF NATHAIRE AND HIS PUPILS occurred in the late spring of 1281, during the interlunar dark. Afterward a new moon waxed above the flowery fields and bright-leaved woods, and waned in ghostly silver. With its waning, people began to talk of other magicians and fresher mysteries.

Then, in the moon-deserted nights of early summer, there came a series of disappearances far more unnatural and inexplicable than that of the dwarfish, malignant sorcerer.

It was found one day, by grave-diggers who had gone early to their toil in a cemetery outside the walls of Vyones, that no less than six newly occupied graves had been opened, and the bodies, which were those of reputable citizens, removed. On closer examination, it became all too evident that this removal had not been effected by robbers. The coffins, which lay aslant or stood protruding upright from the mold, offered all the appearance of having been shattered from within as if by the use of extrahuman strength; and the fresh earth itself was upheaved, as if the dead men, in some awful, untimely resurrection, had actually *dug* their way to the surface.

The corpses had vanished utterly, as if hell had swallowed them; and, as far as could be learned, there were no eye-witnesses of their fate. In those devil-ridden times, only one explanation of the happening seemed

credible: demons had entered the graves and had taken bodily possession of the dead, compelling them to arise and go forth.

To the dismay and horror of all Averoigne, the strange vanishment was followed with appalling promptness by many others of a like sort. It seemed as if an occult, resistless summons had been laid upon the dead. Nightly, for a period of two weeks, the cemeteries of Vyones and also those of other towns, of villages and hamlets, gave up a ghastly quota of their tenants. From brazen-bolted tombs, from common charnels, from shallow, unconsecrated trenches, from the marble-lidded vaults of churches and cathedrals, the weird exodus went on without cessation.

Worse than this, if possible, there were newly ceremented corpses that leapt from their biers or catafalques, and disregarding the horrified watchers, ran with great bounds of automatic frenzy into the night, never to be seen again by those who lamented them.

In every case, the missing bodies were those of young stalwart men who had died but recently and had met their death through violence or accident rather than wasting illness. Some were criminals who had paid the penalty of their misdeeds; others were men-at-arms or constables, slain in the execution of their duty. Knights who had died in tourney or personal combat were numbered among them; and many were the victims of the robber bands who infested Averoigne at that time. There were monks, merchants, nobles, yeomen, pages, priests; but none, in any case, who had passed the prime of life. The old and infirm, it seemed, were safe from the animating demons.

The situation was looked upon by the more superstitious as a veritable omening of the world's end. Satan was making war with his cohorts and was carrying the bodies of the holy dead into hellish captivity. The consternation increased a hundredfold when it became plain that even the most liberal sprinkling of holy water, the performance of the most awful and cogent exorcisms, failed utterly to give protection against this diabolic ravishment. The Church owned itself powerless to cope with the strange evil; and the forces of secular law could do nothing to arraign or punish the intangible agency.

Because of the universal fear that prevailed, no effort was made to follow the missing cadavers. Ghastly tales, however, were told by late wayfarers who had met certain of these liches, striding alone or in companies along the roads of Averoigne. They gave the appearance of being deaf, dumb, totally insensate, and of hurrying with horrible speed and sureness toward a remote, predestined goal. The general direction of their flight, it seemed, was eastward; but only with the cessation of the

exodus, which had numbered several hundred people, did anyone begin to suspect the actual destination of the dead.

This destination, it somehow became rumored, was the ruinous castle of Ylourgne, beyond the werewolf-haunted forest, in the outlying, semi-mountainous hills of Averaigne.

Ylourgne, a great, craggy pile that had been built by a line of evil and marauding barons now extinct, was a place that even the goatherds preferred to shun. The wrathful specters of its bloody lords were said to move turbulently in its crumbling halls; and its chatelaines were the Undead. No one cared to dwell in the shadow of its cliff-founded walls; and the nearest abode of living men was a small Cistercian monastery, more than a mile away on the opposite slope of the valley.

The monks of this austere brotherhood held little commerce with the world beyond the hills; and few were the visitors who sought admission at their high-perched portals. But, during that dreadful summer, following the disappearances of the dead, a weird and disquieting tale went forth from the monastery throughout Averaigne.

Beginning with late spring, the Cistercian monks were compelled to take cognizance of sundry odd phenomena in the old, long-deserted ruins of Ylourgne, which were visible from their windows. They had beheld flaring lights, where lights should not have been: flames of uncanny blue and crimson that shuddered behind the broken, weed-grown embrasures or rose starward above the jagged crenelations. Hideous noises had issued from the ruin by night together with the flames; and the monks had heard a clangor as of hellish anvils and hammers, a ringing of gigantic armor and maces, and had deemed that Ylourgne was become a mustering-ground of devils. Mephitic odors as of brimstone and burning flesh had floated across the valley; and even by day, when the noises were silent and the lights no longer flared, a thin haze of hell-blue vapor hung upon the battlements.

It was plain, the monks thought, that the place had been occupied from beneath by subterrestrial beings; for no one was seen to approach it by way of the bare, open slopes and crags. Observing these signs of the Archfoe's activity in their neighborhood, they crossed themselves with new fervor and frequency, and said their *Paters* and *Aves* more interminably than before. Their toils and austerities, also, they redoubled. Otherwise, since the old castle was a place abandoned by men, they took no heed of the supposed occupation, deeming it well to mind their own affairs unless in case of overt Satanic hostility.

They kept a careful watch; but for several weeks they saw no one who

actually entered Ylourgne or emerged therefrom. Except for the nocturnal lights and noises, and the hovering vapor by day, there was no proof of tenantry either human or diabolic.

Then, one morning, in the valley below the terraced gardens of the monastery, two brothers, hoeing weeds in a carrot-patch, beheld the passing of a singular train of people who came from the direction of the great forest of Averaigne and went upward, climbing the steep, chasmy slope toward Ylourgne.

These people, the monks averred, were striding along in great haste, with stiff but flying steps; and all were strangely pale of feature and were habited in the garments of the grave. The shrouds of some were torn and ragged; and all were dusty with travel or grimed with the mold of interment. The people numbered a dozen or more; and after them, at intervals, there came several stragglers, attired like the rest. With marvelous agility and speed, they mounted the hill and disappeared at length amid the lowering walls of Ylourgne.

At this time, no rumor of the ravished graves and biers had reached the Cistercians. The tale was brought to them later, after they beheld, on many successive mornings, the passing of small or great companies of the dead toward the devil-taken castle. Hundreds of these liches, they swore, had filed by beneath the monastery; and doubtless many others had gone past unnoted in the dark. None, however, were seen to come forth from Ylourgne, which had swallowed them up like the undisgorging Pit.

Though direly frightened and sorely scandalized, the brothers still thought it well to refrain from action. Some, the hardiest, irked by all these flagrant signs of evil, had desired to visit the ruins with holy water and lifted crucifixes. But their abbot, in his wisdom, enjoined them to wait. In the meanwhile, the nocturnal flames grew brighter, the noises louder.

Also, in the course of this waiting, while incessant prayers went up from the little monastery, a frightful thing occurred. One of the brothers, a stout fellow named Theophile, in violation of the rigorous discipline, had made over-frequent visits to the wine-casks. No doubt he had tried to drown his pious horror at these untoward happenings. At any rate, after his potations, he had the ill-luck to wander out among the precipices and break his neck.

Sorrowing for his death and dereliction, the brothers laid Theophile in the chapel and chanted their masses for his soul. These masses in the dark hours before morning, were interrupted by the untimely resurrection of

the dead monk, who, with his head lolling horribly on his broken neck, rushed as if fiend-ridden from the chapel and ran down the hill toward the demon flames and clamors of Ylourgne.

3

FOLLOWING THE ABOVE-RELATED OCCURRENCE, two of the brothers who had previously desired to visit the haunted castle again applied to the abbot for this permission, saying that God would surely aid them in avenging the abduction of Theophile's body as well as the taking of many others from consecrated ground. Marvelling at the hardihood of these lusty monks, who proposed to beard the Arch-enemy in his lair, the abbot permitted them to go forth, furnished with asper-gilluses and flasks of holy water, and bearing great crosses of hornbeam, such as would have served for maces with which to brain an armored knight.

The monks, whose names were Bernard and Stephane, were boldly up at middle forenoon to assail the evil stronghold. It was an arduous climb, among overhanging boulders and along slippery scarps; but both were stout and agile, and, moreover, well accustomed to such climbing. Since the day was sultry and airless, their white robes were soon stained with sweat; but pausing only for brief prayer, they pressed on; and in good season they neared the castle, upon whose gray, time-eroded ramparts they could still descry no evidence of occupation or activity.

The deep moat that had once surrounded the place was now dry, and had been partly filled by crumbling earth and detritus from the walls. The drawbridge had rotted away; but the blocks of the barbican, collapsing into the moat, had made a sort of rough causey on which it was possible to cross. Not without trepidation, and lifting their crucifixes as warriors lift their weapons in the escalade of an armed fortress, the brothers climbed over the ruin of the barbican into the courtyard.

This too, like the battlements, was seemingly deserted. Overgrown nettles, rank grasses and sapling trees were rooted between its paving-stones. The high, massive donjon, the chapel, and that portion of the castellated structure containing the great hall, had preserved their main outlines after centuries of dilapidation. To the left of the broad bailey, a doorway yawned like the mouth of a dark cavern in the cliffy mass of the hall-building; and from this doorway there issued a thin, bluish vapor, writhing in phantom coils toward the unclouded heavens.

Approaching the doorway, the brothers beheld a gleaming of red fires within, like the eyes of dragons blinking through infernal murk. They felt

sure that the place was an outpost of Erebus, an ante-chamber of the Pit; but nevertheless, they entered bravely, chanting loud exorcisms and brandishing their mighty crosses of hornbeam.

Passing through the cavernous doorway, they could see but indistinctly in the gloom, being somewhat blinded by the summer sunlight they had left. Then, with the gradual clearing of their vision, a monstrous scene was limned before them, with ever-growing details of crowding horror and grotesquery. Some of these details were obscure and mysteriously terrifying; others, all too plain, were branded as if with sudden, ineffaceable hell-fire on the minds of the monks.

They stood on the threshold of a colossal chamber, which seemed to have been made by the tearing down of upper floors and inner partitions adjacent to the castle hall, itself a room of huge extent. The chamber seemed to recede through interminable shadow, shafted with sunlight falling through the rents of ruin: sunlight that was powerless to dissipate the infernal gloom and mystery.

The monks averred later that they saw many people moving about the place, together with sundry demons, some of who were shadowy and gigantic, and others barely to be distinguished from the men. These people, as well as their familiars, were occupied with the tending of reverberatory furnaces and immense pear-shaped and gourd-shaped vessels such as were used in alchemy. Some, also, were stooping above great fuming caldrons, like sorcerers busy with the brewing of terrible drugs. Against the opposite wall, there were two enormous vats, built of stone and mortar, whose circular sides rose higher than a man's head, so that Bernard and Stephane were unable to determine their contents. One of the vats gave forth a whitish glimmering; the other, a ruddy luminosity.

Near the vats, and somewhat between them, there stood a sort of low couch or litter, made of luxurious, weirdly figured fabrics such as the Saracens weave. On this the monks discerned a dwarfish being, pale and wizened, with eyes of chill flame that shone like evil beryls through the dusk. The dwarf, who had all the air of a feeble moribund, was supervising the toils of the men and their familiars.

The dazed eyes of the brothers began to comprehend other details. They saw that several corpses, among which they recognized that of Theophile, were lying on the middle floor, together with a heap of human bones that had been wrenched asunder at the joints, and great lumps of flesh piled like the carvings of butchers. One of the men was lifting

the bones and dropping them into a cauldron beneath which there glowed a ruby-colored fire; and another was flinging the lumps of flesh into a tub filled with some hueless liquid that gave forth an evil hissing as of a thousand serpents.

Others had stripped the grave-clothes from one of the cadavers, and were starting to assail it with long knives. Others still were mounting rude flights of stone stairs along the walls of the immense vats, carrying vessels filled with semi-liquescient matters which they emptied over the high rims.

Appalled at this vision of human and Satanic turpitude, and feeling a more than righteous indignation, the monks resumed their chanting of sonorous exorcisms and rushed forward. Their entrance, it appeared, was not perceived by the heinously occupied crew of sorcerers and devils.

Bernard and Stephane, filled with an ardor of godly wrath, were about to fling themselves upon the butchers who had started to assail the dead body. This corpse they recognized as being that of a notorious outlaw, named Jacques Le Loupgarou, who had been slain a few days previous in combat with the officers of the state. Le Loupgarou, noted for his brawn, his cunning and his ferocity, had long terrorized the woods and highways of Averoine. His great body had been half eviscerated by the swords of the constabulary; and his beard was stiff and purple with the dried blood of a ghastly wound that had cloven his face from temple to mouth. He had died unshriven, but nevertheless, the monks were unwilling to see his helpless cadaver put to some unhallowed use beyond the surmise of Christians.

The pale, malignant-looking dwarf had now perceived the brothers. They heard him cry out in a shrill, imperatory tone that rose above the ominous hiss of the cauldrons and the hoarse mutter of men and demons.

They knew not his words, which were those of some outlandish tongue and sounded like an incantation. Instantly, as if in response to an order, two of the men turned from their unholy chemistry, and lifting copper basins filled with an unknown, fetid liquor, hurled the contents of these vessels in the faces of Bernard and Stephane.

The brothers were blinded by the stinging fluid, which bit their flesh as with many serpents' teeth; and they were overcome by the noxious fumes, so that their great crosses dropped from their hands and they both fell unconscious on the castle floor.

Recovering anon their sight and their other senses, they found that their hands had been tied with heavy thongs of gut, so that they were

now helpless and could no longer wield their crucifixes or the sprinklers of holy water which they carried.

In this ignominious condition, they heard the voice of the evil dwarf, commanding them to arise. They obeyed, though clumsily and with difficulty, being denied the assistance of their hands. Bernard, who was still sick with the poisonous vapor he had inhaled, fell twice before he succeeded in standing erect; and his discomfiture was greeted with a cachination of foul, obscene laughter from the assembled sorcerers.

Now, standing, the monks were taunted by the dwarf, who mocked and reviled them with appalling blasphemies such as could be uttered only by a bond-servant of Satan. At last, according to their sworn testimony, he said to them:

"Return to your kennel, ye whelps of Ialdabaoth, and take with you this message: *They that came here as many shall go forth as one.*"

Then, in obedience to a dreadful formula spoken by the dwarf, two of the familiars, who had the shape of enormous and shadowy beasts, approached the body of Le Loupgarou and that of Brother Theophile. One of the foul demons, like a vapor that sinks into a marsh, entered the bloody nostrils of Le Loupgarou, disappearing inch by inch, till its horned and bestial head was withdrawn from sight. The other, in like manner, went in through the nostrils of Brother Theophile, whose head lay wried athwart his shoulder on the broken neck.

Then, when the demons had completed their possession, the bodies, in a fashion horrible to behold, were raised up from the castle floor, the one with ravelled entrails hanging from its wide wounds, the other with a head that drooped forward loosely on its bosom. Then, animated by their devils, the cadavers took up the crosses of hornbeam that had been dropped by Stephane and Bernard; and using the crosses for bludgeons, they drove the monks in ignominious flight from the castle, amid a loud, tempestuous howling of infernal laughter from the dwarf and his necromantic crew. And the nude corpse of Le Loupgarou and the robed cadaver of Theophile followed them far on the chasm-riven slopes below Ylourgne, striking great blows with the crosses, so that the backs of the two Cistercians were become a mass of bloody bruises.

After a defeat so signal and crushing, no more of the monks were emboldened to go up against Ylourgne. The whole monastery, thereafter, devoted itself to triple austerities, to quadrupled prayers; and awaiting the unknown will of God, and the equally obscure machinations of the Devil, maintained a pious faith that was somewhat tempered with trepidation.



One of the demons entered the bloody nostrils of Le Loupgarou.

In time, through goatherds who visited the monks, the tale of Stephane and Bernard went forth throughout Averoigne, adding to the grievous alarm that had been caused by the wholesale disappearance of the dead. No one knew what was really going on in the haunted castle or what disposition had been made of the hundreds of migratory corpses; for the light thrown on their fate by the monks story, though lurid and frightful, was all too inconclusive; and the message sent by the dwarf was somewhat cabalistic.

Everyone felt, however, that some gigantic menace, some black, infernal enchantment, was being brewed within the ruinous walls. The malign, moribund dwarf was all too readily identified with the missing sorcerer, Nathaire; and his underlings, it was plain, were Nathaire's pupils.

ALONE IN HIS ATTIC CHAMBER, Gaspard du Nord, student of alchemy and sorcery and quondam pupil of Nathaire, sought repeatedly, but always in vain, to consult the viper-circled mirror. The glass remained obscure and cloudy, as with the risen fumes of Satanical alembics or baleful necromantic braziers. Haggard and weary with long nights of watching, Gaspard knew that Nathaire was even more vigilant than he.

Reading with anxious care the general configuration of the stars, he found the foretokening of a great evil that was to come upon Averoine. But the nature of the evil was not clearly shown.

In the meanwhile the hideous resurrection and migration of the dead was taking place. All Averoine shuddered at the manifold enormity. Like the timeless night of a Memphian plague, terror settled everywhere; and people spoke of each new atrocity in bated whispers, without daring to voice the execrable tale aloud. To Gaspard, as to everyone, the whispers came; and likewise, after the horror had apparently ceased in early midsummer, there came the appalling story of the Cistercian monks.

Now, at last, the long-baffled watcher found an inkling of that which he sought. The hiding-place of the fugitive necromancer and his apprentices, at least, had been uncovered; and the disappearing dead were clearly traced to their bourn. But still, even for the percipient Gaspard, there remained an undeclared enigma: the hell-dark sorcery, that Nathaire was concocting in his remote den. Gaspard felt sure of one thing only: the dying, splenetic dwarf, knowing that his allotted time was short, and hating the people of Averoine with a bottomless rancor, would prepare an enormous and maleficent magic without parallel.

Even with his knowledge of Nathaire's proclivities, and his awareness of the well-nigh inexhaustible arcanic science, the reserves of pit-deep wizardry possessed by the dwarf, he could form only vague, terrifical conjectures anent the incubated evil. But, as time went on, he felt an ever-deepening oppression, the adumbration of a monstrous menace crawling from the dark rim of the world. He could not shake off his disquietude; and finally he resolved, despite the obvious perils of such an excursion, to pay a secret visit to the neighborhood of Ylourgne.

Gaspard, though he came of a well-to-do family, was at that time in straitened circumstances; for his devotion to a somewhat doubtful science had been disapproved by his father. His sole income was a pittance, purveyed secretly to the youth by his mother and sister.

This sufficed for his meager food, the rent of his room, and a few books and instruments and chemicals; but it would not permit the purchase of a horse or even a humble mule for the proposed journey of more than forty miles.

Undaunted, he set forth on foot, carrying only a dagger and a wallet of food. He timed his wanderings so that he would reach Ylourgne at nightfall in the rising of a full moon. Much of his journey lay through the great, lowering forest, which approached the very walls of Vyones on the eastern side and ran in a somber arc through Averoigne to the mouth of the rocky valley below Ylourgne. After a few miles, he emerged from the mighty wood of pines and oaks and larches; and thenceforward, for the first day, followed the river Isoile through an open, well-peopled plain. He spent the warm summer night beneath a beech-tree, in the vicinity of a small village, not caring to sleep in the lonely woods where robbers and wolves—and creatures of a more baleful repute—were commonly supposed to dwell.

At evening of the second day, after passing through the wildest and oldest portion of the immemorial wood, he came to the steep, stony valley that led to his destination. This valley was the fountain-head of the Isoile, which had dwindled to a mere rivulet. In the brown twilight, between sunset and moonrise, he saw the lights of the Cistercian monastery; and opposite, on the piled, forbidding scarps, the grim and rugged mass of the ruinous stronghold of Ylourgne, with wan and wizard-fires flickering behind its high embrasures. Apart from these fires, there was no sign of occupation; and he did not hear at any time the dismal noises reported by the monks.

Gaspard waited till the round moon, yellow as the eye of some immense nocturnal bird, had begun to peer above the darkling valley. Then, very cautiously, since the neighborhood was strange to him, he started to make his way toward the somber, brooding castle.

Even for one well-used to such climbing, the escalade would have offered enough difficulty and danger by moonlight. Several times, finding himself at the bottom of a sheer cliff, he was compelled to retrace his hard-won progress; and often he was saved from falling only by stunted shrubs and briars that had taken root in the niggard soil. Breathless, with torn raiment, and scored and bleeding hands, he gained at length the shoulders of the craggy height, below the walls.

Here he paused to recover breath and recuperate his flagging strength. He could see from his vantage the pale reflection as of hidden flames, that beat upward on the inner wall of the high-built donjon. He heard

a low hum of confused noises, whose distance and direction were alike baffling. Sometimes they seemed to float downward from the black battlements, sometimes to issue from subterranean depths far in the hill.

Apart from this remote, ambiguous hum, the night was locked in a mortal stillness. The very winds appeared to shun the vicinity of the dread castle. An unseen, clammy cloud of paralyzing evil hung removeless upon all things; and the pale, swollen moon, the patroness of witches and sorcerers, distilled her green poison above the crumbling towers in a silence older than time.

Gaspard felt the obscenely clinging weight of a more burdensome thing than his own fatigue when he resumed his progress toward the barbican. Invisible webs of the waiting, ever-gathering evil seemed to impede him. The slow, noisome flapping of intangible wings was heavy in his face. He seemed to breathe a surging wind from unfathomable vaults and caverns of corruption. Inaudible howlings, derisive or minatory, thronged in his ears, and foul hands appeared to thrust him back. But, bowing his head as if against a blowing gale, he went on and dimbed the mounded ruin of the barbican, into the weedy courtyard.

The place was deserted, to all seeming; and much of it was still deep in the shadows of the walls and turrets. Nearby, in the black, silver-crenelated pile, Gaspard saw the open, cavernous doorway described by the monks. It was lit from within by a lurid glare, wannish and eerie as marsh-fires. The humming noise, now audible as a muttering of voices, issued from the doorway; and Gaspard thought that he could see dark, sooty figures moving rapidly in the lit interior.

Keeping in the farther shadows, he stole along the courtyard, making a sort of circuit amid the ruins. He did not dare to approach the open entrance for fear of being seen; though, as far as he could tell, the place was unguarded.

He came to the donjon, on whose upper wall the wan light flickered obliquely through a sort of rift in the long building adjacent. This opening was at some distance from the ground; and Gaspard saw that it had been formerly the door to a stone balcony. A flight of broken steps led upward along the wall to the half-crumbled remnant of this balcony; and it occurred to the youth that he might climb the steps and peer unobserved into the interior of Ylourgne.

Some of the stairs were missing; and all were in heavy shadow. Gaspard found his way precariously to the balcony, pausing once in considerable alarm when a fragment of the worn stone, loosened by his footfall, dropped with a loud clattering on the courtyard flags below. Apparently it

was unheard by the occupants of the castle; and after a little he resumed his climbing.

Cautiously he neared the large, ragged opening through which the light poured upward. Crouching on a narrow ledge, which was all that remained of the balcony, he peered in on a most astounding and terrific spectacle, whose details were so bewildering that he could barely comprehend their import till after many minutes.

It was plain that the story told by the monks—allowing for their religious bias—had been far from extravagant. Almost the whole interior of the half-ruined pile had been torn down and dismantled to afford room for the activities of Nathaire. The demolition in itself was a superhuman task for whose execution the sorcerer must have employed a legion of familiars as well as his ten pupils.

The vast chamber was fitfully illumed by the glare of athanors and braziers; and, above all, by the weird glimmering from the huge stone vats. Even from his high vantage, the watcher could not see the contents of these vats; but a white luminosity poured upward from the rim of one of them, and a flesh-tinted phosphorescence from the other.

Gaspard had seen certain of the experiments and evocations of Nathaire, and was all too familiar with the appurtenances of the dark arts. Within certain limits, he was not squeamish; nor was it likely that he would have been terrified overmuch by the shadowy, uncouth shapes of demons who toiled in the pit below him side by side with the blackclad pupils of the sorcerer. But a cold horror clutched his heart when he saw the incredible, enormous thing that occupied the central floor: the colossal human skeleton a hundred feet in length stretching for more than the extent of the old castle hall; the skeleton whose bony right foot the group of men and devils, to all appearance, were busily clothing with human flesh!

The prodigious and macabre framework, complete in every part, with ribs like the arches of some Satanic nave, shone as if it were still heated by the fires of an infernal welding. It seemed to shimmer and burn with unnatural life, to quiver with malign disquietude in the flickering glare and gloom. The great finger-bones, curving claw-like on the floor, appeared as if they were about to close upon some helpless prey. The tremendous teeth were set in an everlasting grin of sardonic cruelty and malice. The hollow eye-sockets, deep as Tartarean wells, appeared to seethe with myriad, mocking lights, like the eyes of elementals swimming upward in obscene shadow.

Gaspard was stunned by the shocking and stupendous fantasmagoria

that yawned before him like a peopled hell. Afterward he was never wholly sure of certain things, and could remember very little of the actual manner in which the work of the men and their assistants was being carried on. Dim, dubious, bat-like creatures seemed to be flitting to and fro between one of the stone vats and the group that toiled like sculptors, clothing the bony foot with a reddish plasm which they applied and molded like so much clay. Gaspard thought, but was not certain later, that this plasm, which gleamed as if with mingled blood and fire, was being brought from the rosy-litten vat in vessels borne by the claws of the shadowy flying creatures. None of them, however, approached the other vat, whose wannish light was momentarily enfeebled, as if it were dying down.

He looked for the minikin figure of Nathaire, whom he could not distinguish in the crowded scene. The sick necromancer—if he had not already succumbed to the little-known disease that had long wasted him like an inward flame—was no doubt hidden from view by the colossal skeleton and was perhaps directing the labors of the men and demons from his couch.

Spellbound on that precarious ledge the watcher failed to hear the furtive, catlike feet that were climbing behind him on the ruinous stairs. Too late, he heard the clink of a loose fragment close upon his heels; and turning in startlement, he toppled into sheer oblivion beneath the impact of a cudgel-like blow, and did not even know that the beginning fall of his body toward the courtyard had been arrested by his assailant's arms.

5

GASPARD, RETURNING FROM HIS DARK PLUNGE into Lethan emptiness, found himself gazing into the eyes of Nathaire: those eyes of liquid night and ebony, in which swam the chill, malignant fires of stars that had gone down to irremeable perdition. For some time, in the confusion of his senses, he could see nothing but the eyes, which seemed to have drawn him forth like baleful magnets from his swoon. Apparently disembodied, or set in a face too vast for human cognizance, they burned before him in chaotic murk. Then, by degrees, he saw the other features of the sorcerer, and the details of a lurid scene; and became aware of his own situation.

Trying to lift his hands to his aching head, he found that they were bound tightly together at the wrists. He was half lying, half leaning

against an object with hard planes and edges that irked his back. This object he discovered to be a sort of alchemic furnace, or athanor, part of a litter of disused apparatus that stood or lay on the castle floor. Cupels, aludels, cucurbits, like enormous gourds and globes, were mingled in strange confusion with piled, iron-clasped books and the sooty cauldrons and braziers of a darker science.

Nathaire, propped among Saracenic cushions with arabesques of sullen gold and fulgurant scarlet, was peering upon him from a kind of improvised couch, made with bales of Orient rugs and arrases, to whose luxury the rude walls of the castle, stained with mold and mottled with dead fungi, offered a grotesque foil. Dim lights and evilly swooping shadows flickered across the scene; and Gaspard could hear a guttural hum of voices behind him. Twisting his head a little he saw one of the stone vats, whose rosy luminosity was blurred and blotted by vampire wings that went to and fro.

"Welcome," said Nathaire, after an interval in which the student began to perceive the fatal progress of illness in the pain-pinched features before him. "So Gaspard du Nord has come to see his former master!" The harsh, imperatory voice, with demoniac volume, issued appallingly from the wizened frame.

"I have come," said Gaspard, in laconic echo. "Tell me, what devil's work is this in which I find you engaged? And what have you done with the dead bodies that were stolen by your accursed familiars?"

The frail, dying body of Nathaire, as if possessed by some sardonic fiend, rocked to and fro on the luxurious couch in a long, violent gust of laughter, without other reply.

"If your looks bear creditable witness," said Gaspard, when the baleful laughter had ceased, "you are mortally ill, and the time is short in which you can hope to atone for your deeds of malefice and make your peace with God — if indeed it still be possible for you to make peace. What foul and monstrous brew are you preparing, to insure the ultimate perdition of your soul?"

The dwarf was again seized by a spasm of diabolic mirth.

"Nay, nay, my good Gaspard," he said finally. "I have made another bond than the one with which puling cowards try to purchase the good will and forgiveness of the heavenly Tyrant. Hell may take me in the end, if it will; but Hell has paid, and will still pay, an ample and goodly price. I must die soon, it is true, for my doom is written in the stars: but in death, by the grace of Satan, I shall live again, and shall go forth endowed with the mighty thews of the Anakim, to visit vengeance on

the people of Averroigne, who have long hated me for my necromantic wisdom and have held me in derision for my dwarf stature."

"What madness is this whereof you dream?" asked the youth, appalled by the more than human frenzy and malignity that seemed to dilate the shrunken frame of Nathaire and stream in Tartarean luster from his eyes.

"It is no madness, but a veritable thing: a miracle, mayhap, as life itself is a miracle . . . From the fresh bodies of the dead, which otherwise would have rotted away in charnel foulness, my pupils and familiars are making for me, beneath my instruction, the giant form whose skeleton you have beheld. My soul, at the death of its present body, will pass into this colossal tenement through the working of certain spells of transmigration in which my faithful assistants have also been careful instructed.

"If you had remained with me, Gaspard, and had not drawn back in your petty, pious squeamishness from the marvels and profundities that I should have unveiled for you, it would now be your privilege to share in the creation of this prodigy . . . And if you had come to Ylourgne a little sooner in your presumptuous prying, I might have made a certain use of your stout bones and muscles . . . the same use I have made of other young men, who died through accident or violence. But it is too late even for this, since the building of the bones has been completed, and it remains only to invest them with human flesh. My good Gaspard, there is nothing whatever to be done with you—except to put you safely out of the way. Providentially, for this purpose, there is an oubliette beneath the castle: a somewhat dismal lodging-place, no doubt, but one that was made strong and deep by the grim lords of Ylourgne."

Gaspard was unable to frame any reply to this sinister and extraordinary speech. Searching his horror-frozen brain for words, he felt himself seized from behind by the hands of unseen beings who had come, no doubt, in answer to some gesture of Nathaire: a gesture which the captive had not perceived. He was blindfolded with some heavy fabric, moldy and musty as a grave-cloth, and was led stumbling through the litter of strange apparatus, and down a winding flight of ruinous, narrow stairs from which the noisome breath of stagnating water, mingled with the oily muskiness of serpents, arose to meet him.

He appeared to descend for a distance that would admit of no return. Slowly the stench grew stronger, more insupportable; the stairs ended; a door clanged sullenly on rusty hinges; and Gaspard was thrust forward

on a damp, uneven floor that seemed to have been worn away by myriad feet.

He heard the grating of a ponderous slab of stone. His wrists were untied, the bandage was removed from his eyes, and he saw by the light of flickering torches a round hole that yawned in the oozing floor at his feet. Beside it was the lifted slab that had formed its lid. Before he could turn to see the faces of his captors, to learn if they were men or devils, he was seized rudely and thrust into the gaping hole. He fell through Erebus-like darkness, for what seemed an immense distance, before he struck bottom. Lying half stunned in a shallow, fetid pool, he heard the funereal thud of the heavy slab as it slid back into place far above him.

6

GASPARD WAS REVIVED, AFTER A WHILE, by the chillness of the water in which he lay. His garments were half soaked; and the slimy, mephitic pool, as he discovered by his first movement, was within an inch of his mouth. He could hear a steady, monotonous dripping, somewhere in the rayless night of his dungeon. He staggered to his feet, finding that his bones were still intact, and began a cautious exploration. Foul drops fell upon his hair and lifted face as he moved; his feet slipped and splashed in the rotten water; there were angry, vehement hissings, and serpentine coils slithered coldly across his ankles.

He soon came to a rough wall of stone, and following the wall with his fingertips, he tried to determine the extent of the oubliette. The place was more or less circular, without corners, and he failed to form any just idea of its circuit. Somewhere in his wanderings, he found a shelving pile of rubble that rose above the water against the wall; and here, for the sake of comparative dryness and comfort, he ensconced himself, after dispossessing a number of outraged reptiles. The creatures, it seemed, were inoffensive, and probably belonged to some species of water-snake; but he shivered at the touch of their clammy scales.

Sitting on the rubble-heap, Gaspard reviewed in his mind the various horrors of a situation that was infinitely dismal and desperate. He had learned the incredible, soul-shaking secret of Ylourgne, the unimaginably monstrous and blasphemous project of Nathaire; but now, immured in this noisome hole as in a subterranean tomb, in depths beneath the devil-haunted pile, he could not even warn the world of imminent menace.

The wallet of food, now more than half empty, with which he had started from Vyones, was still hanging at his back; and he assured him-

self by investigation that his captors had not troubled to deprive him of his dagger. Gnawing a crust of stale bread in the darkness, and caressing with his hand the hilt of the precious weapon, he sought for some rift in the all-environing despair.

He had no means of measuring the black hours that went over him with the slowness of a slime-clogged river, crawling in blind silence to a subterranean sea. The ceaseless drip of water, probably from sunken hill-springs that had supplied the castle in former years, alone broke the stillness; but the sound became in time an equivocal monotone that suggested to his half-delirious mind the mirthless and perpetual chuckling of unseen imps. At last, from sheer bodily exhaustion, he fell into troubled, nightmare-ridden slumber.

He could not tell if it were night or noon in the world without when he awakened; for the same stagnant darkness, unrelieved by ray or glimmer, brimmed the oubliette. Shivering, he became aware of a steady draft that blew upon him: a dank, unwholesome air, like the breath of unsunned vaults that had wakened into cryptic life and activity during his sleep. He had not noticed the draft heretofore; and his numb brain was startled into sudden hope by the intimation which it conveyed. Obviously there was some underground rift or channel through which the air entered; and this rift might somehow prove to be a place of egress from the oubliette.

Getting to his feet, he groped uncertainly forward in the direction of the draft. He stumbled over something that crackled and broke beneath his heels, and narrowly checked himself from falling on his face in the slimy, serpent-haunted pool. Before he could investigate the obstruction or resume his blind groping, he heard a harsh, grating noise above, and a wavering shaft of yellow light came down through the oubliette's opened mouth. Dazzled, he looked up, and saw the round hole ten or twelve feet overhead, through which a dark hand had reached down with a flaring torch. A small basket, containing a loaf of coarse bread and a bottle of wine, was being lowered at the end of a cord.

Gaspard took the bread and wine, and the basket was drawn up. Before the withdrawal of the torch and the re-depositing of the slab, he contrived to make a hasty survey of his dungeon.

The place was roughly circular, as he had surmised, and was perhaps fifteen feet in diameter. The thing over which he had stumbled was a human skeleton, lying half on the rubble-heap, half in the filthy water. It was brown and rotten with age, and its garments had long melted away in patches of liquid mold.

The walls were guttered and runneled by centuries of ooze, and their very stone, it seemed, was rotting slowly to decay. In the opposite side, at the bottom, he saw the opening he had suspected: a low mouth, not much bigger than a fox's hole, into which the sluggish water flowed. His heart sank at the sight; for, even if the water were deeper than it seemed, the hole was far too strait for the passage of a man's body. In a state of hopelessness that was like a veritable suffocation, he found his way back to the rubble-pile when the light had been withdrawn.

The loaf of bread and the bottle of wine were still in his hands. Mechanically, with dull, sodden hunger, he munched and drank. Afterward he felt stronger; and the sour, common wine served to warm him and perhaps helped to inspire him with idea which he presently conceived.

Finishing the bottle, he found his way across the dungeon to the low, burrow-like hole. The entering air-current had strengthened, and this he took for a good omen. Drawing his dagger, he started to pick with the point at the half-rotten, decomposing wall, in an effort to enlarge the opening. He was forced to kneel in noisome silt; and the writhing coils of water-snakes, hissing frightfully, crawled across his legs as he worked. Evidently the hole was their means of ingress and egress, to and from the oubliette.

The stone crumbled readily beneath his dagger, and Gaspard forgot the horror and ghastliness of his situation in the hope of escape. He had no means of knowing the thickness of the wall, or the nature and extent of the subterranees that lay beyond; but he felt sure that there was some channel of connection with the outer air.

For hours or days, it seemed, he toiled with his dagger, digging blindly at the soft wall and removing the debris that splashed in the water beside him. After a while, on his belly, he crept into the hole he had enlarged; and burrowing like some laborious mole, he made his way onward inch by inch.

At last, to his prodigious relief, the dagger-point went through into empty space. He broke away with his hands the thin shell of obstructing stone that remained; then, crawling on in the darkness, he found that he could stand upright on a sort of shelving floor.

Straightening his cramped limbs, he moved on very cautiously. He was in narrow vault or tunnel, whose sides he could touch simultaneously with his outstretched finger-tips. The floor was a downward incline; and the water deepened, rising to his knees and then to his waist. Probably the place had once been used as an underground exit from the castle; and the roof, falling in, had dammed the water.

More than a little dismayed, Gaspard began to wonder if he had exchanged the foul, skeleton-haunted oubliette for something even worse. The night around and before him was still untouched by any ray, and the air-current, though strong, was laden with a dankness and moldiness as of interminable vaults.

Touching the tunnel-sides at intervals as he plunged hesitantly into the deepening water, he found a sharp angle, giving upon free space at his right. The space proved to be the mouth of an intersecting passage, whose flooded bottom was at least level and went no deeper into the stagnant foulness. Exploring it, he stumbled over the beginning of a flight of upward steps. Mounting these through the shoaling water, he soon found himself on dry stone.

The stairs, narrow, broken, irregular, without landings, appeared to wind in some eternal spiral that was coiled lightlessly about the bowels of Ylourgne. They were close and stifling as a tomb, and plainly they were not the source of the air-current which Gaspard had started to follow. Whither they would lead he knew not; nor could he tell if they were the same stairs by which he had been conducted to his dungeon. But he climbed steadily, pausing only at long intervals to regain his breath as best he could in the dead, mephitic-burdened air.

At length, in the solid darkness, far above, he began to hear a mysterious muffled sound: a dull but recurrent crash as of mighty blocks and masses of falling stone. The sound was unspeakably ominous and dismal, and it seemed to shake the unfathomable walls around Gaspard, and to thrill with a sinister vibration in the steps on which he trod.

He climbed now with redoubled caution and alertness, stopping ever and anon to listen. The recurrent crashing noise grew louder, more ominous, as if it were immediately above; and the listener crouched on the dark stairs for a time that might have been many minutes, without daring to go farther. At last, with disconcerting suddenness, the sound came to an end, leaving a strained and fearful stillness.

With many baleful conjectures, not knowing what fresh enormity he should find, Gaspard ventured to resume his climbing. Again, in the blank and solid stillness, he was met by a sound: the dim, reverberant chanting of voices, as in some Satanic mass or liturgy with dirge-like cadences that turned to intolerably soaring paeans of evil triumph. Long before he could recognize the words, he shivered at the strong, malefic throbbing of the measured rhythm, whose fall and rise appeared somehow to correspond to the heart-beats of some colossal demon.

The stairs turned, for the hundredth time in their tortuous spiral; and

coming forth from that long midnight, Gaspard blinked in the wan glimmering that streamed toward him from above. The choral voices met him in a more sonorous burst of infernal sound, and he knew the words for those of a rare and potent incantation, used by sorcerers for a supremely foul, supremely maleficent purpose. Affrightedly, as he climbed the last steps, he knew the thing that was taking place amid the ruins of Ylourgne.

Lifting his head warily above the castle floor, he saw that the stairs ended in a far corner of the vastroom in which he had beheld Nathaire's unthinkable creation. The whole extent of the internally dismantled building lay before him, filled with a weird glare in which the beams of the slightly gibbous moon were mingled with the ruddy flames of dying athanors and the coiling, multi-colored tongues that rose from necromantic braziers.

Gaspard, for an instant, was puzzled by the flood of full moonlight amid the ruins. Then he saw that almost the whole inner wall of the castle, giving on the courtyard, had been removed. It was the tearing-down of the prodigious blocks, no doubt through an extrahuman labor levied by sorcery, that he had heard during his ascent from the subterranean vaults. His blood curdled, he felt an actual horripilation, as he realized the purpose for which the wall had been demolished.

It was evident that a whole day and part of another night had gone by since his immurement; for the moon rode high in the pale sapphire welkin. Bathed in its chilly glare, the huge vats no longer emitted their eerie and electric phosphorescence. The couch of Saracen fabrics, on which Gaspard had beheld the dying dwarf, was now half hidden from view by the mounting fumes of braziers and thuribles, amid which the sorcerer's ten pupils, clad in sable and scarlet, were performing their hideous and repugnant rite, with its malefically measured litany.

Fearfully, as one who confronts an apparition reared up from nether hell, Gaspard beheld the colossus that lay inert as if in Cyclopean sleep on the castle flags. The thing was no longer a skeleton: the limbs were rounded into bossed, enormous thews, like the limbs of Biblical giants; the flanks were like an insuperable wall; the deltoids of the mighty chest were broad as platforms; the hands could have crushed the bodies of men like millstones . . . *But the face of the stupendous monster, seen in profile athwart the lowering moon, was the face of the Satanic dwarf, Nathaire—re-magnified a hundred times, but the same in its implacable madness and malevolence!*

The vast bosom seemed to rise and fall; and during a pause of the

necromantic ritual, Gaspard heard the unmistakable sound of mighty respiration. The eye in the profile was closed; but its lid appeared to tremble like a giant curtain, as if the monster were about to wake; and the outflung hand, with fingers pale and bluish as a row of corpses, twitched unquietly on the castle flags.

An insupportable terror seized the watcher; but even this terror could not induce him to return to the noisome vaults he had left. With infinite hesitation and trepidation, he stole forth from the corner, keeping in a zone of ebon shadow that flanked the castle wall.

As he went, he saw for moment, through bellying folds of vapor, the couch on which the shrunken form of Nathaire was lying pallid and motionless. It seemed that the dwarf was dead, or had fallen into a stupor preceding death. Then the choral voices, crying their dreadful incantation, rose higher in Satanic triumph; the vapors eddied like a hell-boru cloud, coiling about the sorcerers in python-shaped volumes, and hiding again the Orient couch and its corpse-like occupant.

A thralldom of measureless evil oppressed the air. Gaspard felt that the awful transmigration, evoked and implored with ever-swelling, liturgic blasphemies, was about to take place—had perhaps already occurred. He thought that the breathing giant stirred, like one who tosses in light slumber.

Soon the towering, massively recumbent bulk was interposed between Gaspard and the chanting necromancers. They had not seen him; and he now dared to run swiftly, and gained the courtyard unpursued and unchallenged. Thence, without looking back, he fled like a devil-hunted thing upon the steep and chasm-river slopes below Ylourgne.

7

AFTER THE CESSATION OF THE EXODUS OF LICHES, a universal terror still prevailed; a wide-flung shadow of apprehension, infernal and funereal, lay stagnantly on Averoigne. There were strange and disastrous portents in the aspect of the skies: flame-bearded meteors had been seen to fall beyond the eastern hills; a comet, far in the south, had swept the stars with its luminous bosom for a few nights, and had then faded, leaving among men the prophecy of bale and pestilence to come. By day the air was oppressed and sultry, and the blue heavens were heated as if by whitish fires. Clouds of thunder, darkling and withdrawn, shook their fulgurant lances on the far horizons, like some beleaguering Titan army. A murrain, such as would come from the work-

ing of wizard spells, was abroad among the cattle. All these signs and prodigies were an added heaviness on the burdened spirits of men, who went to and fro in daily fear of the hidden preparations and machinations of hell.

But, until the actual breaking-forth of the incubated menace, there was no one, save Gaspard du Nord, who had knowledge of its veritable form. And Gaspard, fleeing headlong beneath the gibbous moon toward Vyones, and fearing to hear the tread of a colossal pursuer at any moment, had thought it more than useless to give warning in such towns and villages as lay upon his line of flight. Where, indeed—even if warned—could men hope to hide themselves from the awful thing, begotten by Hell on the ravished charnel, that would walk forth like the Anakim to visit its roaring wrath on a trampled world?

So, all that night, and throughout the day that followed, Gaspard du Nord, with the dried slime of the oubliette on his briar-shredded raiment, plunged like a madman through the towering woods that were haunted by robbers and werewolves. The westward-falling moon flickered in his eyes betwixt the gnarled, somber boles as he ran; and the dawn overtook him with the pale shafts of its searching arrows. The noon poured over him its white sultriness, like furnace-heated metal sublimed into light; and the clotted filth that clung to his tatters was again turned into slime by his own sweat. But still he pursued his nightmare-harried way, while a vague, seemingly hopeless plan took form in his mind.

In the interim, several monks of the Cistercian brotherhood, watching the gray walls of Ylourgne at early dawn with their habitual vigilance, were the first, after Gaspard to behold the monstrous horror created by the necromancers. Their account may have been somewhat tinged by a pious exaggeration; but they swore that the giant rose abruptly, standing more than waist-high above the ruins of the barbican, amid a sudden leaping of long-tongued fires and a swirling of pitchy fumes erupted from Malebolge. The giant's head was level with the high top of the donjon, and his right arm, outthrust, lay like a bar of stormy cloud athwart the new-risen sun.

The monks fell grovelling to their knees, thinking that the Archfoe himself had come forth, using Ylourgne for his gateway from the Pit. Then, across the mile-wide valley, they heard a thunderous peal of demoniac laughter; and the giant, climbing over the mounded barbican at a single step, began to descend the scarp and craggy hill.

When he drew nearer, bounding from slope to slope, his features were

manifestly those of some great devil animated with ire and malice toward the sons of Adam. His hair, in matted locks, streamed behind him like a mass of black pythons; his naked skin was livid and pale and cadaverous, like the skin of the dead; but beneath it, the stupendous thews of a Titan swelled and rippled. The eyes, wide and glaring, flamed like lidless cauldrons heated by the fires of the unplumbed Pit.

The rumor of his coming passed like a gale of terror through the Monastery. Many of the Brothers, deeming discretion the better part of religious fervor, hid themselves in the stone-hewn cellars and vaults. Others crouched in their cells, mumbling and shrieking inchoherent pleas to all the Saints. Still others, the most courageous, repaired in a body to the chapel and knelt in solemn prayer before the wooden Christ on the great crucifix.

Bernard and Stephane, now somewhat recovered from their grievous beating, alone dared to watch the advance of the giant. Their horror was inexpressibly increased when they began to recognize in the colossal features a magnified likeness to the lineaments of the evil dwarf who had presided over the dark unhallowed activities of Ylourgne; and the laughter of the colossus, as he came down the valley, was like a tempest-borne echo of the damnable cachinnation that had followed their ignominious flight from the haunted stronghold. To Bernard and Stephane, however, it seemed merely that the dwarf, who was no doubt an actual demon, had chosen to appear in his natural form.

Pausing in the valley-bottom, the giant stood opposite the monastery with his flame-filled eyes on a level with the window from which Bernard and Stephane were peering. He laughed again—an awful laugh, like a subterranean rumbling—and then, stopping, he picked up a handful of boulders as if they had been pebbles, and proceeded to pelt the monastery. The boulders crashed against the walls, as if hurled from great catapults or mangonels of war; but the stout building held, though shaken grievously.

Then, with both hands, the colossus tore loose an immense rock that was deeply embedded in the hillside; and lifting this rock, he flung it at the stubborn walls. The tremendous mass broke in an entire side of the chapel; and those who had gathered therein were found later, crushed into bloody pulp amid the splinters of their carved Christ.

After that, as if disdaining to palter any further with a prey so insignificant, the colossus turned his back on the little monastery, and like some fiend-born Goliath, went roaring down the valley into Averogne.

As he departed, Bernard and Stephane, still watching from their win-

dow, saw a thing they had not perceived heretofore: a huge basket made of planking, that hung suspended by ropes between the giant's shoulders. In the basket, ten men — the pupils and assistants of Nathaire — were being carried like so many dolls or puppets in a peddler's pack.

Of the subsequent wanderings and depredations of the colossus, a hundred legends were long current throughout Averroigne: tales of an unexampled ghastliness, a wanton diabolism without parallel in all the histories of that demon-pestered land.

The goatherds of the hills below Ylourgne saw him coming, and fled with their nimble-footed flocks to the highest ridges. To these he paid little heed, merely trampling them down like beetles when they could not escape from his path. Following the hill-stream that was the source of the river Isoile, he came to the verge of the great forest; and here, it is related, he tore up a towering ancient pine by the roots, and snapping off the mighty boughs with his hands, shaped it into a cudgel which he carried henceforward.

With this cudgel, heavier than a battering-ram, he pounded into shapeless ruin a wayside shrine in the outer woods. A hamlet fell in his way, and he strode through it, beating in the roofs, toppling the walls, and crushing the inhabitants beneath his feet.

To and fro in a mad frenzy of destruction, like a death-drunken Cyclops, he wandered all that day. Even the fierce beasts of the woodland ran from him in fear. The wolves, in mid-hunt, abandoned their quarry and retired, howling dismally with terror, to their rocky dens. The black, savage hunting-dogs of the forest barons would not face him, and hid whimpering in their kennels.

Men heard his mighty laughter, his stormy bellowing; they saw his approach from a distance of many leagues, and fled or concealed themselves as best they could. The lords of moated castles called in their men-at-arms, drew up their drawbridges and prepared as if for the siege of an army. The peasants hid themselves in caverns, in cellars, in old wells, and even beneath hay-mounds, hoping that he would pass them by unnoticed. The churches were crammed with refugees who sought the protection of the Cross, deeming that Satan himself, or one of his chief lieutenants, had risen to harry and lay waste the land.

In a voice like summer thunder, mad maledictions, unthinkable obscenities and blasphemies were uttered ceaselessly by the giant as he went to and fro. Men heard him address the litter of black-clad figures that he carried on his back, in tones of admonishment or demonstration such as a master would use to his pupils. People who had known Nathaire

recognized the incredible likeness of the huge features, the similarity of the swollen voice, to his. A rumor went abroad that the dwarf sorcerer, through his loathly bond with the Adversary, had been permitted to transfer his hateful soul into this Titanic form; and, bearing his pupils with him, had returned to vent an insatiable ire, a bottomless rancor, on the world that had mocked him for his puny physique and reviled him for his sorcery. The charnel genesis of the monstrous avatar was also rumored; and, indeed, it was said that the colossus had openly proclaimed his identity.

It would be tedious to make explicit mention of all the enormities, all the marauding giant . . . There were people—mostly priests and women, it is told—whom he picked up as they fled, and pulled limb from limb as a child might quarter an insect . . . And there were worse things, not to be named in this record . . .

Many eye-witnesses told how he hunted Pierre, the Lord of La Frenais, who had gone forth with his dogs and men to chase a noble stag in the near-by forest. Overtaking horse and rider, he caught them with one hand, and bearing them aloft as he strode over the tree-tops, he hurled them; and the huge bloody blotches the Chateau of La Frenais in passing. Then, catching the red stag that Pierre had hunted, he flung it after them; and the huge bloody blotchers made by the impact of the pashed bodies remained long on the castle stone, and were never wholly washed away by the autumn rains and the winter snows.

Countless tales were told, also, of the deeds of obscene sacrilege and profanation committed by the colossus: of the wooden Virgin that he flung into the Isoile above Ximes, lashed with human gut to the rotting, mail-clad body of an infamous outlaw; of the wormy corpses that he dug with his hands from unconsecrated graves and hurled into the courtyard of the Benedictine abbey of Perigon; of the Church of Ste. Zenobie, which he buried with its priests and congregation beneath a mountain of ordure made by the gathering of all the dungheaps from neighboring farms.

BACK AND FORTH, IN AN IRREGULAR, DRUNKEN, zigzag course, from end to end and side to side of the harried realm, the giant strode without pause, like an energumen possessed by some implacable fiend of mischief and murder, leaving behind him, as a reaper

leaves his swath, an ever-lengthening zone of havoc, of rapine and carnage. And when the sun, blackened by the smoke of burning villages, had set luridly beyond the forest, men still saw him moving in the dusk, and heard still the portentous rumbling of his mad, stormy cackinnation.

Nearing the gates of Vyones at sunset, Gaspard du Nord saw behind him, through gaps in the ancient wood, the far-off head and shoulders of the terrible colossus, who moved along the Isoile, stooping from sight at intervals in some horrid deed.

Though numb with weariness and exhaustion, Gaspard quickened his flight. He did not believe, however, that the monster would try to invade Vyones, the especial object of Nathaige's hatred and malice, before the following day. The evil soul of the sorcerous dwarf, exulting in its almost infinite capacity for harm and destruction, would defer the crowning act of vengeance, and would continue to terrorize, during the night, the outlying villages and rural districts.

In spite of his rags and filth, which rendered him practically unrecognizable and gave him a most disreputable air, Gaspard was admitted without question by the guards at the city gate. Vyones was already thronged with people who had fled to the sanctuary of its stout walls from the adjacent countryside; and no one, not even of the most dubious character, was denied admittance. The walls were lined with archers and pike-bearers, gathered in readiness to dispute the entrance of the giant. Crossbowmen were stationed above the gates, and mangonels were mounted at short intervals along the entire circuit of the ramparts. The city seethed and hummed like an agitated hive.

Hysteria and pandemonium prevailed in the streets. Pale, panic-stricken faces milled everywhere in an aimless stream. Hurrying torches flared dolorously in the twilight that deepened as if with the shadow of impending wings arisen from Erebus. The gloom was clogged with intangible fear, with webs of stifling oppression. Through all this rout of wild disorder and frenzy, Gaspard, like a spent but indomitable swimmer breasting some tide of eternal, viscid nightmare, made his way slowly to his attic lodgings.

Afterward, he could scarcely remember eating and drinking. Overworn beyond the limit of bodily and spiritual endurance, he threw himself down on his pallet without removing his ooze-stiffened tatters, and slept soddenly till an hour half-way between midnight and dawn.

He awoke with the death-pale beams of the gibbous moon shining upon him through his window; and rising, spent the balance of the night in making certain occult preparations which, he felt, offered the only

possibility of coping with the fiendish monster that had been created and animated by Nathaire.

Working feverishly by the light of the westering moon and a single taper, Gaspard assembled various ingredients of familiar alchemic use which he possessed, and compounded from these, through a long and somewhat cabalistic process, a dark-gray powder which he had seen employed by Nathaire on numerous occasions. He had reasoned that the colossus, being formed from the bones and flesh of dead men unlawfully raised up, and energized only by the soul of a dead sorcerer, would be subject to the influence of this powder, which Nathaire had used for the laying of resurrected liches. The powder, if cast in the nostrils of such cadavers, would cause them to return peacefully to their tombs, and lie down in a renewed slumber of death.

Gaspard made a considerable quantity of the mixture, arguing that no mere finger-pinch would suffice for the lulling of the gigantic charnel monstrosity. His guttering yellow candle was dimmed by the white dawn as he ended the Latin formula of fearsome verbal invocation from which the compound would derive much of its efficacy. The formula, which called for the co-operation of Alastor and other evil spirits, he used with unwillingness. But he knew that there was no alternative: sorcery could be fought only with sorcery.

Morning came with new terrors to Vyones. Gaspard had felt, through a sort of intuition, that the vengeful colossus, who was said to have wandered with unhuman tirelessness and diabolic energy all night through Averaigne, would approach the hated city early in the day. His intuition was confirmed; for scarcely had he finished his occult labors when he heard a mounting hubbub in the streets, and above the shrills, dismal clamor of frightened voices, the far-off roaring of the giant.

Gaspard knew that he must lose no time, if he were to post himself in a place of vantage from which he could throw his powder into the nostrils of the hundred-foot colossus. The city walls, and even most of the church spires, were not lofty enough for this purpose; and a brief reflection told him that the great cathedral, standing at the core of Vyones, was the one place from whose roof he could front the invader with success. He felt sure that the men-at-arms on the walls could do little to prevent the monster from entering and wreaking his malevolent will. No earthly weapon could injure a being of such bulk and nature; for even a cadaver of normal size, reared up in this fashion, could be shot full of arrows or transfixed by a dozen pikes without retarding its progress.

Hastily he filled a huge leathern pouch with the powder; and carrying

the pouch at his belt, he joined the agitated press of people in the street. Many were fleeing toward the cathedral, to seek the shelter of its august sanctity; and he had only to let himself be borne along by the frenzy-driven stream.

The cathedral nave was packed with worshippers, and solemn masses were being said by priests whose voices faltered at times with inward panic. Unheeded by the wan, despairing throng, Gaspard found a flight of coiling stairs that led tortuously to the gargoyle-warded roof of the high tower.

Here he posted himself, crouching behind the stone figure of a cat-headed griffin. From his vantage he could see, beyond the crowded spires and gables, the approaching giant, whose head and torso loomed above the city walls. A cloud of arrows, visible even at the distance, rose to meet the monster, who apparently did not even pause to pluck them from his hide. Great boulders hurled from mangonels were no more to him than a pelting of gravel; the heavy bolts of arbalests, embedded in his flesh, were mere slivers.

Nothing could stay his advance. The tiny figures of a company of pikemen, who opposed him with outthrust weapons, were swept from the wall above the eastern gate by a single sidelong blow of the seventy-foot pine that he bore for a cudgel. Then, having cleared the wall, the colossus climbed over it into Vyones.

Roaring, chuckling, laughing like a maniacal Cyclops, he strode along the narrow streets between houses that rose only to his waist, trampling without mercy everyone who could not escape in time, and smashing in the roofs with stupendous blows of his bludgeon. With a push of his left hand he broke off the protruding gables, and overturned the church steeples, with their bells clanging in dolorous alarm as they went down. A woful shrieking and wailing of hysteria-laden voices accompanied his passing.

Straight toward the cathedral he came, as Gaspard had calculated, feeling that the high edifice would be made the special butt of his malevolence.

The streets were now emptied of people; but, as if to hunt them out and crush them in their hiding-places, the giant thrust his cudgel like a battering-ram through walls and windows and roofs as he went by. The ruin and havoc that he left was indescribable.

Soon he loomed opposite the cathedral tower on which Gaspard waited behind the gargoyle. His head was level with the tower, and his eyes flamed like wells of burning brimstone as he drew near. His lips were

parted over stalactitic fangs in a hateful snarl; and he cried out in a voice like the rumbling of articulate thunder: "Ho! ye puffing priests and devotees of a powerless God! Come forth and bow to Nathaire the master, before he sweeps you into limbo!"

It was then that Gaspard, with a hardihood beyond comparison, rose from his hiding-place and stood in full view of the raging colossus. "Draw nearer, Nathaire, if indeed it be you, foul robber of tombs and charnels," he taunted. "Come close, for I would hold speech with you."

A monstrous look of astonishment dimmed the diabolic rage on the colossal features. Peering at Gaspard as if in doubt or incredulity, the giant lowered his lifted cudgel and stepped close to the tower, till his face was only a few feet from the intrepid student. Then, when he apparently convinced himself of Gaspard's identity, the look of maniacal wrath returned, flooding his eyes with Tartarean fire and twisting his lineaments into a mask of Apollyon-like malignity. His left arm came up in a prodigious arc, with twitching fingers that poised horribly above the head of the youth, casting upon him a vulture-black shadow in full-risen sun. Gaspard saw the white, startled faces of the necromancer's pupils, peering over his shoulder from their plank-built basket.

"Is it you, Gaspard, my recreant pupil?" the colossus roared stormily. "I thought you were rotting in the oubliette beneath Ylourgne—and now I find you perched atop of this accursed cathedral which I am about to demolish! . . . You had been far wiser to remain where I left you, my good Gaspard."

His breath, as he spoke, blew like a channel-polluted gale on the student. His vast fingers, with blackened nails like shovel-blades, hovered in ogreish menace. Gaspard had furtively loosened his leathern pouch that hung at his belt, and had untied its mouth. Now, as the twitching fingers descended toward him, he emptied the contents of the pouch in the giant's face, and fine powder, mounting in a dark-gray cloud, obscured the snarling lips and palpitating nostrils from his view.

Anxiously he watched the effect, fearing that the powder might be useless after all, against the superior arts and Satanical resources of Nathaire. But miraculously, as it seemed, the evil lambence died in the pit-deep eyes, as the monster inhaled the flying cloud. His lifted hand, narrowly missing the crouching youth in its sweep, fell lifelessly at his side. The anger erased from the mighty, contorted mask, as if from the face of a dead man; the great cudgel fell with a crash to the empty street; and then, with drowsy, lurching steps and listless, hanging arms, the giant

turned his back to the cathedral and retraced his way through the devastated city.


He muttered dreamily to himself as he went; and people who heard him swore that the voice was no longer the awful, thunder-swollen voice of Nathaire, but the tones and accents of a multitude of men, amid which the voices of certain of the ravished dead were recognizable. And the voice of Nathaire himself, no louder now than in life, was heard at intervals through the manifold mutterings, as if protesting angrily.

Climbing the eastern wall as it had come, the colossus went to and fro for many hours, no longer wreaking a hellish wrath and rancor, but searching, as people thought, for various tombs and graves from which the hundreds of bodies that composed it had been so foully reft. From charnel to charnel, from cemetery to cemetery it went, through all the land; but there was no grave anywhere in which the dead colossus could lie down.

Then, toward evening men saw it from afar on the red rim of the sky, digging with its hands in the soft, loamy plain beside the river Isoile. There, in a monstrous and self-made grave, the colossus laid itself down, and did not rise again. The ten pupils of Nathaire, it was believed, unable to descend from their basket, were crushed beneath the mighty body; for none of them was ever seen thereafter.

For many days no one dared to approach the place where the corpse lay uncovered in its-dug grave. And so the thing rotted prodigiously beneath the summer sun, breeding a mighty stench that wrought pestilence in that portion of Averoigne. And they who ventured to go near in the following autumn, when the stench had lessened greatly, swore that the voice of Nathaire, still protesting angrily, was heard by them to issue from the enormous, rook-haunted bulk.

Of Gaspard du Nord, who had been the savior of the province, it is related that he lived in much honor to a ripe age, being the one sorcerer of that region who at no time incurred the disapprobation of the Church.



Inquisitions

AND FLIGHTS OF ANGELS

The Life and Legend of Hannes Bok
By Emil Petaja and Divers Hands

The Bokanalia Memorial Foundation, P.O. Box 14126, San Francisco, California 94114; copyright 1968 by Emil Petaja; 156 pages in loose-leaf binding, mss. size; profusely illustrated by Bok, plus photographs, etc., \$5.00, postpaid. Limited Edition: 600 copies.

In his straightforward introduction, Emil Petaja says: "You will find errors, omissions, personal statements made. We regret the errors, despair for completeness, but we make no apology for our personal statements." I found no errors of fact in those sections of biography dealing with the time when I was acquainted with Hannes. The errors I did note were typographical, phrases or lines repeated, etc. They are not serious enough, or frequent enough to spoil this handsome production much, unless you are a perfectionist like Bok himself.

Pages 9-75 contain Petaja's biography of 'Hannes. It is, as he indicates, personal—and it certainly requires no apology whatsoever. It is discursive here, reticent, there, and in places seems to lose track of its organization—but never becomes incoherent. When did Hannes die? It's

discoverable, but not directly. On page 63 we find: "Ten days before he died he wrote me more on the subject (4/2/64) . . ."

At the bottoms of most of the pages of the biography section, you will find reproductions of Bok sketches (heretofore unpublished) and of small drawings, or excerpts, which appeared in magazines as illustrations or department heads. Page 76 has two black-and-white drawings, then follows seven pages of drawings and photographs in blue, followed by a page of photos in black and white. (I might add that it was especially good to see a picture of Farnsworth Wright.)

The balance of the contents is as follows: "*A Memorial for Hannes Bok* (poem), by Edith Ogutsch; *Untitled* lines on the work of Hannes Bok upon hearing of his death, by Roger Zelazny; *For En il*, by Hannes Bok; *Letter* from Jack and Edna Cordes (look carefully here; in my copy the sheet is misbound, and I had to turn the page in order to read page 89 before page 90); *Hannes Bok*, by Jack Gaughan; *The Remembered Elf*, by Ben Indick; *Hannes Bok*, by Godfrey Lee; *A Non-Eulogy*, by Donald A. Wollhelm; *Hannes Bok Looks at Fantasy Art and Illustration*, an 11 page article by Bok, reprinted from *THE FAN-*

SCIENT; *Hannes Bok Index*; *A Folio of Prints by Hannes Bok*; *About Bokanalia*; and *Candle's End*, by Emil Petaja.

It's a little obscure to me why the table of contents for the volume appears on page 130, but there's probably an explanation. Somehow it all seems to fit. For despite Emil's reluctance to say anything but good about a dear friend deceased, enough of the follies and idiosyncracies come through so that those who never met him can appreciate why it was that those of us who knew Hannes could find him both intensely lovable and no less impossible to get along with for any length of time. Like Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith, Hannes Bok knew what he wanted; realized a price must be paid, and paid it without whining, though not without Beethoven-like thunderings, at times.

The book is reproduced on a very fine grade of white paper, which has something of the texture of wallpaper

and the print and artwork all come out with wonderful clarity.

The appreciations that follow Petaja's very moving biography are all valuable, as is the reprint of Hannes' thoughts on fantasy art.

Bokanalia Foundation has made an excellent beginning with its folios and this book. I say a beginning, for as desirable as the perpetuation of Bok's best drawings and sketches (and perhaps eventually color work) may be, I suspect (from the few samples I saw) that his astrological writings may be even more valuable. There is a keen mind in the elf, one of which few of us (and I was not among that few soon enough) recognized when we saw him.

I have a good imagination, but it strains it to the breaking point to try to imagine any person who responds to Bok's artwork at all not wanting to own this book. Just remember now: contents page on 130. RAWL



It Is Written...

Emil Petaja's biography of Hannes Bok (which you will find reviewed in *Inquisitions*) does not include my own favorite anecdote about Hannes, so I'll repeat it here. Sometime in 1941, he showed me his first short story, *The Alien Vibration*, which struck me as a very good tale. So I told him that I'd love to use it, and how about a drawing to go along with it. At which Hannes gave a very ballet-like leap into the air and exclaimed, "Yippee! Not only is my story accepted, but I get an illustration by Bok!"

In reference to Robert A. Madle's letter in the July issue, which related the story behind the book publication of *The Abyss*, Mrs. David H. Keller writes: "Bob is right in that story had just been finished when the meeting he refers to took place in 1947. Dr. Keller had worked on it during the winter of '46/'47 and had not presented it to any others for reading.

"As a psychiatrist he knew, of course, that a certain amount of probing examination of a patient's affect and past must be done to obtain the *cause* of disturbance and if possible effect a cure or at least easement. But he was strongly opposed to control or expansion of the mind . . . So with the certain knowledge of the long-serving practitioner, and the

imagination of a fertile mind, he wrote *The Abyss*.

"It may be true, as Madle reports, that in '46 and '47, Keller was 'considered passe', but I question that from the many, many requests Dr. Keller got for stories from publishers. But from 1941-1945, he was on active duty in the army and had no time for story-writing and had thus not been published.

"When he did resume writing it was almost exclusively for his *own pleasure* with little, if any, consideration of the market.

"However, after the appearance of the *Life Everlasting* collection, edited and published by Sam Moskowitz's Avalon Press, there were actually *hundreds* of pleas from the hopeful editors of the 'fanzines', to which he most liberally donated, still with only occasional submissions to the trade publications. He was happy to aid the ambitious fan and content to write eight (unpublished) books for his own pleasure, and perhaps 80 stories—never polished or retyped, just first drafts—and some 40 others re-worked, all written from the winter of 1945 to 1963, when invalidism prevented further typing."

It often happens that the notion that such and such an author is now *passe*, and therefore ought not to be published, is strictly an editor's

private opinion (or a publisher's, foisted on the editor) and has nothing to do with whether the people who buy the magazine might enjoy reading new stories by the author in question. True it is that styles of writing, modes of presentation, etc., change; and of course the young reader who wants to be completely modern and up to date in everything becomes supersensitive to stories that other people might say are old-fashioned. Unfortunately, this is the sort of reader who is likely to make the most noise—write frequent letters to the editor—while a much larger section of the readers may be neither afraid nor ashamed to recognize and enjoy a good story just because it does not conform to the latest fashions and fads in writing. Nor again, do most readers feel compelled to define "good story" according to the "party line" of the latest trends. But they aren't the noisy ones!

It would be nice if I could say that I never fell into that trap, or caught that infection, but the fact that it never occurred to me to find out if my old favorite, Dr. Keller, was still writing, when I came back to science fiction magazine editing in 1950, after a seven year lapse, suggests that the virus had hit me.

Richard Gröse writes: "Two stories in the July MOH deserve the 'O' accolade in my book. *Worms of the Earth* is excellent, although I prefer several other of Robert E. Howard's efforts over it. Some say 'Worms' is his best, but *The Pool of the Black One* sticks in my mind as one of my favorites from Howard's pen.

"*The Castle in the Window* ranks

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a 'O' also. It has a mixture of time, place, and strangeness which I found wholly satisfying. I agree with you that H.P. Lovecraft would have liked this story, as it contains ingredients he worked with so ably in his own superb fiction.

"A *Psychical Invasion* rates a '1', partly for the black cat in it which reminds me very much of my own. Apart from that, the concluding installment was a big improvement over part one."

I'm not sure that *Worms of the Earth* is my selection for Howard's best story, either; but it is certainly a strong candidate, being one which has retained its emotional effect on me over the years, so that I would think of it almost any time I talked about REH's stories; and the multiple re-readings when it was run here did not demean it for me.

Mike Ashley writes from 8 Shurland Avenue, Sittingbourne, Kent,

England: "I have just within the minute finished MOH 22, and leapt at my typewriter, still overjoyed with *A Psychical Invasion*, which at present reckoning is perhaps the greatest horror short I've read, and I am glad that I read the two parts together and not with any time separating them . . . I wonder if I'll still be so in love with this story in a few months when I have a chance to view it as lasting! It wouldn't surprise me. Like *Dr. Muncing*, *Exorcist*, which you printed a couple of years ago, it carries superb story, pace, everything; and *The Whistling Room*. So please, please more John Silence, and, for that matter, more Carnacki and so on . . .

"I notice your remarks about the Anna Hunger yarns, but my rating of *Come* as last is not because I didn't like it; it's just that I preferred the others. Her yarns tend to grow on me more. I read the story, and

DID YOU MISS OUR EARLY ISSUES

We Still Have A Few Numbers In Volume One

#1, August 1963: *Out of print.*

#3, February 1964: *Out of print.*

#2, November 1963: *The Space-Eaters*, Frank Belknap Long; *The Faceless Thing*, Edward D. Hoch; *The Red Room*, H.G. Wells; *Hungary's Female Vampire* (article), Dean Lipton; *A Tough Tussle*, Ambrose Bierce; *Doorslammer*, Donald A. Wollheim; *The Electric Chat*, George Waigh; *The Other One*, Jerry L. Keane; *The Chamber*, Archie Blinn; *Clarissa*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes*, Rudyard Kipling.

#4, May 1964: *Out of print.*

#5, September 1964: *Cassius*, Henry S. Whitehead; *Love at First Sight*, J. L. Miller; *Five-Year Contract*, by J. Vernon Shea; *The House of the Worm*, Merle Prout; *The Beautiful Suit*, H.G. Wells; *A Stranger Came to Reap*, Stephen Dentinger; *The Morning the Birds Forgot to Sing*, Walt Liebscher; *Bones*, Donald A. Wollheim; *The Ghostly Rental*, Henry James.

Coming Next Issue

The procession was quickly marshaled, and attended by her maids, Alice marched serenely up the aisle. As she had no male relative to do the office, the duty of giving her in marriage was delegated to me, both she and her mother declaring that no one more deserved the honor than the one who had assisted her into the world and brought her through the measles, chicken-pox and whooping cough. . . .

"Now when Doctor Bentley, has pronounced the warning, 'if no one offers an impediment to the marriage,'" the curate who was acting as master of ceremonies informed us, "you will proceed to the communion rail and—"

Somewhere outside, faint and faraway-seeming, but gaining quickly in intensity, there came a high, thin, whistling sound, piercing, but so high one could scarcely hear it. Rather, it seemed more like a screaming heard inside the head than any outward sound, and strangely, it seemed to circle the three of us—the bride, the bridegroom and me—and to cut us definitely off from the remainder of the party.

"Queer," I thought. "There was no wind a moment ago, yet—" The thin, high whining closed tighter round us, and involuntarily I put my hands to my ears to shut out the intolerable sharpness of it, when with a sudden crash the painted window just above the altar burst as though a missile struck it, and through the ragged aperture came drifting a billowing yellow haze—a cloud of saffron dust, it seemed to me—which hovered momentarily above the unveiled cross upon the altar, then dissipated slowly, like steam evaporating in winter air.

I felt an odd sensation, almost like a heavy blow delivered to my chest, as I watched the yellow mist disintegrate, then straightened with a start as another sound broke on my hearing.

"Alice! Alice, where are you?" the bridegroom called, and through the bridal party ran a wondering murmur:

"Where's Alice? She was right here a moment ago! Where is she? Where's she gone?"

I blinked my eyes and shook my head. It was so. Where the bride had stood, her fingers resting lightly on my arm, a moment before there was only empty space.

Your response to our inquiry has resulted in an overwhelming chorus of "Yes, please do!" votes for our serialization of this popular weird novel

THE DEVIL'S BRIDE

by Seabury Quinn

Have You Missed These Issues?

6, November 1964: *Caveins of Horror*, Laurence Manning; *Prodigy*, Walt Liebscher; *The Mask*, Robert W. Chambers; *The Life-After-Death of Mr. Thaddeus Warde*, Robert Barbour Johnson; *The Feminine Fracton*, David Grinnell; *Dr. Heidigger's Experiment*, Nathaniel Hawthorne; *The Pacer*, August Derleth; *The Moth*, H. G. Wells; *The Door to Saturn*, Clark Ashton Smith.

7, January 1965: *The Thing from Outside*, George Allan England; *Black Thing at Midnight*, Joseph Payne Brennan; *The Oblong Box*, Edgar Allan Poe; *A Way with Kids*, Ed M. Clinton; *The Devil of the Marsh*, E.B. Marriott-Watson; *The Shattered Room*, H.P. Lovecraft & August Derleth.

8, April 1965: *The Black Laugh*, William J. Makin; *The Hand of Glory*, R.H.D. Barham; *The Garrison*, David Grinnell; *Passeur*, Robert W. Chambers; *The Lady of the Velvet Collar*, Washington Irving; *Jack*, Reynold Junker; *The Burglar-Proof Vault*, Oliver Taylor; *The Dead Who Walk*, Ray Cummings;

#9, June 1965: *The Night Wire*, H.F. Arnold; *Sacrilege*, Wallace West; *All the Stain of Long Delight*, Jerome Clark; *Skulls in the Stars*, Robert E. Howard; *The Photographs*, Richard Marsh; *The Distortion out of Space*, Francis Flagg; *Guarantee Period*, William M. Danner; *The Door in the Wall*, H.G. Wells; *The Three Low Masses*, Alphonse Daudet; *The Whistling Room*, William Hope Hodgson.

am usually only mildly impressed and seldom offer much reaction. But perhaps a month later I suddenly think, 'Now what was that story in which such and such happened?', and on thinking harder I suddenly realize it was by Anna Hunger and I find myself liking it—which I'll probably do with this story, because it was perhaps one of her best you've published.

"*Worms of the Earth*, not REH at his best—that is Solomon Kane in my opinion—but REH at his second best, which is no mean effort. A pity a bit more wasn't made of those preellenistic Briton beings. Hmmm, nice to think about what does crawl under these green lands and glades that still abound my homeland here. So long as no Tolkienistic barrowweight assails me I'll be content. Or an REH 'worm'.

"*The Castle in the Window*, a very entertaining story, though perhaps a little contrived, but it's the sort, as I say, which supplies pleasant reading, and a nice start to the day. (I read it at about 8 in the morning, on my way to work, as I do much of my reading.)

"*They Called Him Ghost*—this idea of almost total reincarnation after five generations fascinated me, until I thought of our own royal family, but then five generations back from Elizabeth II was Victoria . . . hmm, who knows? So long as Elizabeth doesn't become like that Victorian old bat, I shall be happy. Though author Cahill did say it didn't have to be direct descent, but anywhere in the family; and considering the size of Victoria's family . . . hmm! No, another pleasant

and intriguing story with a cunning twist ending.

"*The Phantom 'Rickshaw* wasn't outstandingly horrific, or particularly marvelous, but then I'm not a great admirer of Kipling. Some of his yarns are okay, and I tend to categorize him with Conan Doyle, both capable of good stories, but also notable for boring ones (in my opinion). This one came about halfway betwixt. It was dramatized on the radio about a year ago, but I find reading it slightly better.

"And back to *A Psychical Invasion*—the best story ever in MOH. These ghost finder yarns are certainly my favorite, and John Silence and Carnacki beat the lot. I try to analyze what it is about them that so captures me into the story, but I think it must surely be the masterful story telling of Blackwood and Hodgson and the intriguing quality of the story-line itself. But then, I ask myself, why don't I also like Jules de Grandin with the same passion? De Grandin yarns, though I like them, I find I can't get so wrapped up in, so involved in. With this present yarn I was really right in the story, even though I had to break it at three different points when I had to get off the bus to work, and so on. I would dearly have loved to read it at one sitting. I hope that most people didn't read it in two parts but at one go.

"... Great to find you bi-monthly again. You'll be in line for a Hugo yet."

Kipling, I hear, is coming back into favor with the establishment critics—to a certain extent. One can pass as literate, that is, if one appreciates

Have You Missed These Issues?

#10, August 1965: *The Girl at Heddon's*, Pauline Kappel Priluck; *The Torture of Hope*, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam; *The Cloth of Madness*, Seabury Quinn; *The Tree*, Gerald W. Page; *In the Court of the Dragon*, Robert W. Chambers; *Placide's Wife*, Kirk Mashburn; *Come Closer*, Joanna Russ; *The Plague of the Living Dead*, A. Hyatt Verrill.

#11, November 1965: *The Empty Zoo*, Edward D. Hoch; *A Psychological Shipwreck*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Call of the Mech-Men*, Laurence Manning; *Was it a Dream*, Guy de Maupassant; *Under the Hau Tree*, Katherine Yates; *The Head of Du Bois*, Dorothy Norman Cooke; *The Dweller in Dark Valley* (verse), Robert E. Howard; *The Devil's Pool*, Grege la Spina.

#12, Winter 1965/66: *The Faceless God*, Robert Bloch; *Master Nicholas*, Seabury Quinn; *But not the Herald*, Roger Zelazny; *Dr. Munching, Exorcist*, Gordon MacCreagh; *The Affair at 7 Rue de M.*, John Steinbeck; *The Man in the Dark*, Irwin Ross; *The Abyss*, Robert A.W. Lowndes; *Destination* (verse), Robert E. Howard; *Memories of HPL* (article), Muriel E. Eddy; *The Black Beast*, Henry S. Whitehead.

#13, Summer 1966: *The Thing in the House*, H. F. Scotten; *Divine Madness*, Roger Zelazny; *Valley of the Lost*, Robert E. Howard; *Heredity*, David H. Keller; *Dwelling of the Righteous*, Anna Hunger; *Almost Immortal*, Austin Hall.

#14, Winter 1966/67: Out of print.

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Have You Missed These Issues?

#15, Spring 1967: *The Room of Shadows*, Arthur J. Burks; *Lilies*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Flaw*, J. Vernon Shea; *The Doom of London*, Robert Barr; *The Vale of Lost Women*, Robert E. Howard; *The Ghoul Gallery*, Hugh B. Cave.

#16, Summer 1967: *Night and Silence*, Maurice Level; *Lazarus*, Leonid Andreyev; *Mr. Octbur*, Joseph Payne Brennan; *The Dog That Laughed*, Charles Willard Diffrin; *Ah, Sweet Youth*, Pauline Kappel Priluck; *The Man Who Never Was*, R. A. Lafferty; *The Leaden Ring*, S. Baring-Gould; *The Monster of the Prophecy*, Clark Ashton Smith.

#17, Fall 1967: *A Sense of Crawling*, Robert Edmond Aker; *The Laughing-Duke*, Wallace West; *Dermod's Bane*, Robert E. Howard; *The Spell of the Sword*, Frank Aubrey; "Williamson", Henry S. Whitehead; *The Curse Of Amen-Ra*, Victor Rousseau.

#18, November 1967: *In Amundsen's Tent*, John Martin Leahy; *Transient and Immortal*, Jim Haught; *Out of the Deep*, Robert E. Howard; *The Bibliophile*, Thomas Boyd; *The Ultimate Creature*, R. A. Lafferty; *Wolves of Darkness*, Jack Williamson.

#19, January 1968: *The Red Witch*, Niczina Dyalhis; *The Last Letter From Norman Underwood*, Larry Eugene Meredith; *The Jewels of Vishnu*, Harriet Bennett; *The Man From Cincinnati*, Holloway Horn; *Ground Afire*, Anna Hunger; *The Wind In The Rose-Bush*, Mary Wilkins-Freeman; *The Last of Placid's Wife*, Kirk Mashoura; *The Years are as a Knife*, (verse) Robert E. Howard.

Order From Page 128

Captains Courageous and *The Jungle Book*; but I believe that the rest is not to be mentioned. I'm always grateful to learn of the latest ukases from the critical establishment mainstream division, since I'd rather not pass as literate by their lights—although I wouldn't abhor something just because they approved it. After all, they're not perfect: nobody can be wrong all the time.

A Hugo for *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* strikes me as not only bizarre, but also frightening, if not a little gruesome; it would tell me that the term 'science fiction' had become totally meaningless.

Gene D'Orsogna writes from Stony Brook, N.Y., "Your editorial was as informative as ever. On the subject of Keller's apparent simplicity of style: My college lit. prof., in citing styles in fantasy fiction condemns the doctor for 'insulting his readers with four-word sentences and banal, plain people' (!) my exclamation point. He continued by saying that in his mind, 'Homer Eon Flint (good lord!) with his fine naturalistic style (!?!)' and his classic, eminently readable novel, *The Blind Spot* (zounds!) is the finest author in the field.'! There were several rebuttals, all of which were sneered down.

"*The Abyss*, the star of the issue, as always, was unbelievably powerful. His characters are real, three-dimensional entities. The 'scientific jargon', that is, the discussions on the drug XYZ, as well as Dr. Jungers' analysis of symbolism, were among the most compelling segments. The method of dispensing the 'Chu-chu gum' seemed somewhat contrived;

needless to say, it would seem nearly impossible, even in 1947. But I feel this implausible means will be more than justified in the end.

"Douglas M. Dold's *The Thirteenth Floor* is little more than a gruesome reworking of *A Christmas Carol*. This is not meant to deride the story. I found it very engrossing, to say the least. The idea of the dead reliving the suicides of others was a vivid, moving, frightening scene. So overwhelming was this segment, that the ending, penned with pure maple syrup, can easily be forgiven.

"*One By One* is, without a doubt, one of the most literate, sincerely intelligent new stories, in any branch of literature, that I have read in some time. Brilliantly, Mr. Hodgins has created his shadowy nether world. I was drawn along with the last Theophilus until the very end, completely entangled in the strange, haunting fable.

"*Leapers* did not really come off for me. I found it, despite any revisions you may have made, still too slavish an imitation of Lovecraft. To my mind, only Lovecraft could pull off a successful horror story relying, as he did, on almost pure narrative.

"But there was something else missing here, too. It lacked the subtle inference of *Clarissa*, the murky, startling imagery of your *The Abyss*, or the wild explosion of grotesque, strangely beautiful flamboyance of *Lilies*. Don't take me wrongly; I want to see more of your work in MOH. Besides, I predict that *Leapers* will finish in the second spot in the final reckoning.

"*The Death Mask*, on the offset, had me expecting more than it delivered. The opening paragraphs,

Have You Missed These Issues?

#20, March 1968: *The Stren of the Snakes*, Arlon Eadie; *The Rack*, G. G. Ketcham; *A Cry From Beyond*, Victor Rousseau; *Only Gone Before*, Emil Petajä; *The Voice*, Neil Kay; *The Monsters*, Murray Leinster.

#21, May 1968: *Kings of the Night*, Robert E. Howard; *The Counting of Private Rogoff*, David A. English; *The Brain-Eaters*, Frank Belknap Long; *A Psychical Invasion* (part one), Algernon Blackwood; *Nasturtia*, Col. S. P. Meek; *The Dark Star*, G. G. Pendarves.

#22, July 1968: *Worms of the Earth*, Robert E. Howard; *Come, Anna Hunger*; *They Called Him Ghost*, Laurence J. Cahill; *The Phantom Rickshaw*, Rudyard Kipling; *The Castle in the Window*, Stefan B. Aletti; *A Psychical Invasion*, (part two), Algernon Blackwood.

#23, September 1968: *The Abyss* (part one), David H. Keller, M.D.; *The Death Mask*, Mrs. H. D. Everett; *One By One*, Richard M. Hodgins; *The Thirteenth Floor*, Douglas M. Dold; *Leapers*, Robert A. W. Lowndes

#24, November 1968: *Once in a Thousand Years*, Frances Bragg Middleton; *The Eye of Horus*, Stefan B. Aletti; *4 Prose Poems: Memory, What the Moon Brings, Nyarlathotep, Ex Oblivione*, H.P. Lovecraft; *A Diagnosis of Death*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Abyss* (part two), David H. Keller, M.D.

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too, hinted at a ghost story of fine proportions. It soon descended to the level of fainting (Victorian style) women, and quivering, ineffectual men. The first appearance of the face was startling enough, but after that it seemed to get stale to the point of self parody. It moved at a good clip, however, and did not consume too much of my time.

"If you are now considering serials, I would very much like to see William Hope Hodgson's *The House on the Borderland* serialized."

I'm far from astonished that the sort of mentality which finds nothing wrong with the grade of English, and the characterizations, to be found in *The Blind Spot* (and can't distinguish between Flint and Hall) would also find everything wrong with Dr. Keller's style and characterizations.

Igor Stravinsky made the perfect comment upon this sort of consciousness, when he attended the premiere of Walt Disney's *Fantasia*, and saw what had been done to his own *Sacre du Printemps*: "One does not argue with imbecility."

So be of good cheer. Many of us had to suffer through the same operation from so-called authorities in our own schooldays. But there are exceptions. It was my home room teacher in 8A, talking to us enthusiastically about the wonderful short stories of H.G. Wells, who first gave me encouragement in what seemed to me to be a utterly hostile world, so far as "imaginative fiction" was concerned. He told us the story of *The Red Room*, and a wonderfully chilling performance it was.



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Tuesday the 28th. Just before sunrise, while I was yet asleep, Mr. Christian, with the master at arms, gunner's mate, and Thomas Burkitt, seaman, came into my cabin, and seizing me, tied my hands with a cord behind my back, threatening me with instant death, if I spoke or made the least noise: I, however, called as loud as I could, in hopes of assistance; but they had already secured the officers who were not of their part, by placing sentinels at their doors. There were three men at my cabin door, besides the four within; Christian had only a cutlass in his hand, the others had muskets and bayonets. I was hauled out of bed, and forced on deck in my shirt, suffering great pain from the tightness with which they had tied my hands. I demanded the reason for such violence, but received no other answer than abuse, for not holding my tongue. The master, the gunner, the surgeon, Mr. Elphinstone, master's mate, and Nelson, were kept confined below . . .

You Won't Want To Miss

A MUTINY ABOARD THE SHIP

by Lt. William Bligh

in the new 5th issue of

**WORLD-WIDE
ADVENTURE**

See page 125

The House on the Borderland is very long, and it has been reprinted separately by Ace Books, D-553, each 35 cents.

You may be right about *Leapers*; I certainly hope you're right about the three other stories with which you compare it. Seventy-five percent is still a passing grade.

Eddy C. Bertin writes from 17, Vlaamse kaai, Gent, Belgium: "Could you mention my address in your magazine and write 'badly wanted to complete collection: *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* # 4.' After looking through your series, which I have now otherwise complete, I can only say 'excellent'. Your Finlay covers are the best you got till now, except the one cover by Gray Morrow. As logotype I liked best the almost electrical lettering of 'Horror' on the Morrow cover, but as they are now they are good, too—better than the gore-dripping letters you used at one time. I have all the Lovecraft fiction in print, and some out of print too, but I see no reason why a *real* HPL fan would object to your printing of some Lovecraft shorts. This is a way of bringing HPL to new readers who may not have read much by him. But, please, not too long novelets of swords and sorcery by Robert E. Howard and Co."

I agree with the desirability of running a short story by H.P. Lovecraft once in a while. As a run-over of the back-issues columns will show, four numbers of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* are now out of print. RAWL

The Editor's Page

(continued from page 5)

Smith's mightiest champion was H. P. Lovecraft, whose taste in weird fiction was of the highest order. Lovecraft sought to draw attention not only to the stories, but also to the poetry (of which Wright published a generous sample) and the artwork—drawings and sculpture. While my own preferences in poetry no longer include the Smith type, I can still see that it is excellent of its type, and the translations (or renderings) from Baudelaire retain their appeal for me. With the artwork, I'll admit that my inability to respond favorably to it might represent a lack in me, rather than an absence of merit in the drawings and sculptures themselves. It has been highly praised by persons whose taste I know to be good—persons who are not readily taken in by pseudo-art and fads.

He illustrated a number of his stories, the present one among them, and these illustrations were con-

troversial to say the least. To my eyes, one is little better or worse than another, but it's only fair that you should have a chance to see what I'm talking about. If it is possible to obtain a clear reproduction of it, you'll see his illustration for *The Colossus of Ylourgne* here.

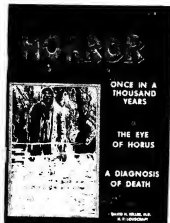
It is to August Derleth and Arkham House that we all owe thanks for the fact that Smith's stories are still alive outside of crumbling old magazines, for anthology appearances have been few and, if memory serves me right, not always top grade Smith—though, of course, the anthologist likely felt otherwise.

Two elements we find in Smith that are missing in Lovecraft are humor and eroticism, and it was partly because I had read some of the Averroigne tales by CAS that Cabell's *Figures of Earth*, *The Silver Stallion*, and *Jurgen* also appealed to me back in the 30's. RAWL



Subscription And Back Issue Order Page

It may sound like no more than a continuing come-on when you read in issue after issue that our stock is low on back issues of **MAGAZINE OF HORROR**. Nonetheless, this is true—and we have no way of knowing how long the supply of any issue will last. Two are out of print, and we kid you not in saying that orders for back issues come in every day. Be warned!



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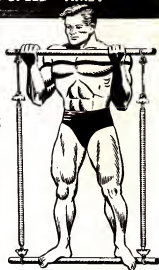


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